

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCIENCES OF THE QUR'AN

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early Muslims from such undue attributions, and cannot accept that such ideas were really made by them, because they justifiably wished to preserve the Qur'an.

More unbelievably, the author believed that the despotic ruler Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī had altered the manuscript in twelve places, changing its first writing – which was then prevalent and popular amongst the Muslims – and turned it into its current recitation. For example, he says:

In *Sūrah al-Shu'arā'*, in the account of the Prophet Nūḥ it was stated 'min al-mukhrajīn' (26:116), and in the account of Prophet Lūṭ (Lot) it was stated 'min al-marjūmīn' (26:167), but Ḥajjāj interchanged them.⁶⁷⁷

The weakness of such claims is obvious to any fair-minded person, for Ḥajjāj was immersed in his world of cruel politics and had no connection with matters of religion and the Qur'an.

Ibn Khaṭīb has narrated this fabricated story from *Sijistānī's al-Maṣāḥif* from 'Awf,⁶⁷⁸ on the authority of 'Abbād ibn Ṣuhayb. As far as *rijāl*⁶⁷⁹ scholars are concerned, 'Abbād is a fabricator and regarded as *matrūk al-ḥadīth*,⁶⁸⁰ and Abū Dāwūd is the only person to have paid attention to his narration.⁶⁸¹

Imām Ḥāfiẓ Muhammad ibn Ḥayyān says: "Abbād would narrate unknown traditions from prominent personalities which would be easily detected by even the uninitiated whenever they hear them."⁶⁸² Amongst these narrations was this absurd story which was believed by Ibn Khaṭīb and presented by him in his book as definitely authentic. At the end of the book he mentions recitations (*qirā'āt*) attributed to the Companions which are contrary to the common recitations prevalent amongst the Muslims. These recitations were transmitted by a solitary report (*khābar al-wāḥid*) and are not authoritative, and for this reason cannot be relied upon. The text of the Qur'an has been established by definite *mutawātir* transmission agreed upon by the Muslims. How can we attribute a contrary

⁶⁷⁷ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Furqān*, 50-52.

⁶⁷⁸ *Sijistānī, al-Maṣāḥif*, 49-50.

⁶⁷⁹ *Rijāl* or 'ilm al-*Rijāl* is a branch of the science of *ḥadīth* dealing with the biographies of the *ḥadīth* transmitters or reporters. [Trans.]

⁶⁸⁰ *Matrūk al-ḥadīth* is a person whose narrations are rejected. [Trans.]

⁶⁸¹ Al-Dhahabī, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 1, 326, no. 3037.

⁶⁸² Abū Ḥātim Muhammad ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Majrūḥīn min al-Muḥaddithīn wa al-Ḍu'afā' wa al-Matrūkīn* (Aleppo: Dār al-Waṭī, 1396 q.), vol. 2, 164.

transmission to the Companions when they knew very well the original text which they had heard from the mouth of the Prophet? We consider it improbable for them to have deviated from the text transmitted from the Prophet by *tawātur*. This is a false attribution which offends the high rank of the Companions, particularly the recitations attributed to the Commander of the Faithful, Ali,⁶⁸³ since his recitation is the same as the present one, which was transmitted by Ḥafṣ from 'Āṣim, who heard it from Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, who, in turn – as we have examined in detail in the discussion on recitations – heard it from Imām 'Alī himself.

Even stranger is the fact that Ibn Khaṭīb attributes to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb the belief that it is permissible for those who cannot recite the Qur'an correctly to replace words with synonymous ones. He says:

One day 'Umar was teaching this Qur'anic verse to a bedouin man:

Indeed the tree of zaqqūm will be the food of the sinful (ṭa'ām al-athīm) (44:43-44).

This man would recite *ṭa'ām al-yatīm* (the food of the orphan). When 'Umar realised that he could not pronounce *athīm*, he told him: 'Say, *ṭa'ām al-fājir* (*fājir* being synonymous with *athīm*, meaning 'sinful')'. The man recited the verse thus: *Inna shajarat az-zaqqūmi ṭa'amu al-fājir*.⁶⁸⁴

These are fabricated stories whose falsity is indeed obvious.

TAHRĪF ACCORDING TO THE AKHBĀRĪS

Above we discussed the futile claims of certain Sunnī Ḥashwiyyah regarding *tahrīf*. Now we shall examine another baseless view postulated by another extremist sect known as the Akhbāriyyah.⁶⁸⁵ By accepting the

⁶⁸³ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Furqān*, 106.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Furqān*, 115.

⁶⁸⁵ In his book *Maṣā'ib al-Nawāṣib*, al-Tustarī has described the Akhbārīs as *shirdhimatun qalīlah*, i.e., those who are in minority in the Shī'a Imāmiyyah. See Balāghī, *Ālā' al-Raḥmān*, vol. 1, 25-26.

Akhbarism (*akhbāriyyah*) is a movement which started within the Shī'a world about four hundred years ago. Its originator was Mullā Muhammad Amīn ibn Muhammad Sharīf al-Astarābādī (d. 1033/1623-24). He openly attacked the Shī'a *mujtahids* in his

notion of *tahrīf* and imprudently undermining the sanctity of the Qur'an, they have become one with their Ḥashwīyah brethren.

It was clearly established in earlier chapters that learned scholars, *mujtahids* and holders of authority amongst the Shī'a have all refuted the possibility of *tahrīf* on the basis of *mutawātir* textual and rational proofs, consistently upholding the original stance which the Qur'an stipulates. Similarly, most of the great Imāmiyyah *ḥadīth* scholars (*muḥaddithūn*) have agreed with the other scholars in denying the notion of *tahrīf*. This state of affairs has continued from the time of the pioneering *ḥadīth* scholar, Abū Ja'far al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991), up to the time of the two prominent *ḥadīth* scholars, Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1090/1679) and al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1104/1692), and their stance has been steadfastly maintained from generation to generation.

In short, the notion of *tahrīf* has been propagated in recent times by a small deviant group whose opinion has no credibility for the Shī'a. This started when their leading scholar, Jazā'irī (1050/1640-1112/1700), preached his idea on the fringes of the Persian Gulf. He founded this idea on the basis of weak arguments, unknown narrations and inaccurate records.

He was succeeded by certain confused thinkers until finally their foremost scholar, Muḥaddith Nūrī (1254-1320 AH), appeared and followed the same thread in his *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, which attempts to reject the Qur'anic proofs and negate its authority.

We shall now examine some of the reasons Jazā'irī states in his *Manba' al-Ḥayāt*:

Widespread *mutawātir* reports show that addition, deletion and distortion have found their way into the Qur'an. Amongst them is a narration from the Commander of the Faithful, Ali, which has been transmitted in reply to a question regarding the compatibility of two sentences from the following verse:

work *al-Fawā'id al-Madaniyyah*, vehemently contesting the Uṣūlīs' claim that reason is one of the sources of *fiqh*. The Uṣūlīs hold the Qur'an, the *Sunnah*, reason and *ijmā'* (consensus) as valid sources for the deduction of the rules of the *sharī'ah*. The Akhbārīs accepted the validity of only the *Sunnah* and rejected the rest. Understanding the Qur'an, they claimed, is beyond the capacity of the commoner, being restricted exclusively to *Ahl al-Bayt*. [Trans.]

If you fear that you may not do justice to the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four... (4:3).

The Imām said: 'More than a third of the Qur'an has been deleted within this verse!'

On the exegesis of the verse *Kuntum khayra ummatin ... You are the best of people, brought forth for mankind...* (3:110) Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said: 'How can this nation be the best, considering that they killed the son of the Prophet?' The correct revealed form of the verse is as follows: *Kuntum khayra a'immatin* ('You are the best Imāms (a'immah instead of ummah)'), and it refers to the Imāms from *Ahl al-Bayt*.

Moreover, it is transmitted in many reports that the revealed verse of Ghadīr is as follows:

O Messenger, make known that which hath been sent down to you concerning 'Alī from thy Lord. If thou do it not, thou will not have conveyed His message (5:67).

There are also other narrations which, if gathered together, would amount to a huge book.

He continues:

Keeping all this in view, *tahrīf* – in terms of addition and deletion – took place with the Qur'an on two occasions, i.e., during the lifetime of the Prophet and during the period of the Companions. The Qur'an was revealed little by little according to needs and circumstances, and the scribes of the revelation – who were fourteen from amongst the Companions under the leadership of Imām 'Alī – would in most cases record verses concerning legal rulings and which were revealed in public; but only 'Alī would be informed of the verses which were revealed privately in the house of the Prophet, for he was always in the company of the Prophet. Therefore, the Imām's manuscript was more comprehensive than others.

He adds:

After the demise of the Prophet and the scattering of the people, 'Alī embarked upon compiling the Qur'an according to the order of revelation. After finishing it, he covered it with his robe and

brought it to the mosque. The first and second caliphs and other Companions were then in the mosque. The Imām said to them: 'This book is the true revealed Qur'an.' 'Umar said: 'We are not in need of your manuscript, for the manuscript of 'Uthmān is at our disposal.' The Imām said: 'Neither you nor others will ever see it until such time when my son, the Master of the Time (*ṣāhib al-zamān*), appears and urges the people to recite it and act upon its laws. Until such a day, God will take this manuscript to heaven.' After becoming caliph, 'Umar tried his best to get hold of this manuscript and burn it, as he did with that of Ibn Mas'ūd. He asked 'Alī for it, but the Imām refused to grant it to him.

Jazā'irī says:

This Qur'an has been preserved by the Imāms, and they would secretly recite it, although they would instruct some of their more intimate followers with it. For example, Thiqaṭ al-Islām Kulaynī has reported Sālim ibn Salamah to have said: 'Someone was once reciting the Qur'an in the presence of Imām al-Ṣādiq. I heard some words of the Qur'an [being recited] contrary to the common recitation. Imām al-Ṣādiq told the man: 'Desist from this recitation and recite the Qur'an the way it is commonly recited until such a time that our Qā'im⁶⁸⁶ rises up. On that day, he will recite the Qur'an the way it should be recited, and he will bring forth the manuscript which 'Alī used to keep.

Jazā'irī adds:

This tradition which has reached us, and others that say the same, have allowed us to recite the existing manuscript and act upon its rulings.

Elsewhere he states:

Because of the multiple manuscripts due to the many scribes of revelation, Abū Bakr and 'Umar decided to select the manuscript of 'Uthmān and parts of others, and to collect the rest and boil them in a large pot full of hot water... If the manuscripts were

⁶⁸⁶ Qā'im is one of the honorific titles of Imām al-Mahdī, which means 'the executor (Qā'im) of God's command.' [Trans.]

uniform, they would not have committed such an abhorrent act for which they are condemned.

And:

Praise for *Ahl al-Bayt* and condemnation of the hypocrites and Banū Umayyah were both openly and implicitly reflected in the manuscript, but in order to conceal their flaws and out of jealousy for the family of the Prophet they deleted such verses.

Again:

In his *Sa'd al-Su'ūd*, the trusted scholar, 'Alī ibn Ṭāwūs, reports from Muhammad ibn Baḥr Rahanī, a prominent Sunnī scholar: 'The manuscripts that 'Uthmān dispatched to the cities varied, and the words and letters were inconsistent, although all of them were inscribed by 'Uthmān himself.'

Jazā'irī then comments:

If the manuscripts which 'Uthmān himself had inscribed were such, the condition of the manuscripts of other scribes and their respective proponents is obvious.

Therefore, during the second period, which was the time of the *qurrā'*, the Qur'an was distorted, for the manuscript at their disposal had no dots or declension (*i'rāb*), as did the manuscripts at the disposal of 'Alī and his immaculate descendants. I have seen some of them in the library of Imām Rīḍā.

In short, the manuscripts at the disposal of the reciters were devoid of dots and inflection, and thus they exercised their discretion with regard to the dots, *idghām*,⁶⁸⁷ the spelling and the like.⁶⁸⁸

The errors and inconsistencies in this passage are so clear that there is no need to investigate them. His insufficient knowledge of the history of the compilation of the Qur'an is evidenced when he says: 'As 'Alī brought his manuscript to the people, 'Umar rose up and said: 'The manuscript of 'Uthmān is sufficient for us.' But 'Uthmān's manuscript

⁶⁸⁷ *Idghām* (ادغام): the contraction of two identical letters into one and pronouncing this with *tashdīd*. [Trans.]

⁶⁸⁸ Sayyid Ni'matullāh Jazā'irī, *Manba' al-Ḥayāt* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Najāh, n.d.), 68-70.

did not exist at that time. He also says: 'The manuscripts dispatched to the [different] cities were inscribed by 'Uthmān,' as if 'Uthmān wrote all the manuscripts himself.

He added the following: "Umar burned the manuscript of Ibn Mas'ūd, and also intended to do the same with that of 'Alī; in order to acquire it, he resorted to different ways, but he failed.'

He also said: 'Abū Bakr and 'Umar burned the manuscripts and selected some parts of what 'Uthmān wrote in his one, while boiling the rest in a big pot. Even stranger was his saying: 'Many manuscripts in 'Alī's handwriting were sent to the [different] cities.' It is as if the Imām had so much free time that he could have written all the manuscripts which were in fact compiled by others. He also regarded the different recitations as a proof of the distortion of the Qur'an, even though the Qur'an is one thing and the recitations another.

Jazā'irī's main proof was a number of narrations which he identified as *mutawātir* to substantiate his point. He quoted some of them and supposed that they were the clearest textual proof. We shall deal with these narrations in detail at an appropriate juncture. Here we shall only look over them in order to demonstrate their weaknesses, since narrations which indicate *tahriḥ* have unreliable chains of transmission, while those whose chains are authentic have nothing to do with *tahriḥ*. Other narrations are also of the same kind.

The tradition about the alleged deletion of one third of the Qur'an from the third verse of *Sūrah al-Nisā'* has only been mentioned by the author of *al-Iḥtijāj*.⁶⁸⁹ Like many other fabricated narrations quoted by this author, the narration is fabricated and *mursal*, and does not have an unbroken chain of transmission. For this reason, his book has no credibility and Shī'a scholars have not relied on it. Even Sayyid Hāshim Baḥrānī (d. 1107/1695) considered it implausible and did not mention it in his exegesis *al-Burhān*, which was written on the basis of traditions related to the circumstances of the revelation of the verses. Neither have 'Ayyāshī (d. 320/932), Qummī (d. 329/941) or other famous exegetes quoted this narration.

In addition, the author of *al-Iḥtijāj* is unknown, although it has been attributed to Ṭabrisī. Baḥr al-'Ulūm has identified six possible authors

⁶⁸⁹ See Tabarsī, *al-Iḥtijāj*, vol. 1, 377.

of *al-Ihtijāj*.⁶⁹⁰ It is the opinion of some researchers that the author was perhaps someone else who originated from Ṭabaristān⁶⁹¹ or Tafresh,⁶⁹² and that his name was Arabised as 'Ṭabrisī' (from Ṭabaristān) or Ṭabrisī (from Tafresh).

The tradition itself is baseless and contrary to reason and faith, for it states that: 'Within the edicts relating to justice to orphans and the marrying of women, more than one-third of the Qur'an containing stories and admonitions has been deleted.' In other words, the hypocrites have deleted all the verses (more than two thousand verses) which were part of a single verse, i.e., the third verse of *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, although it is unclear why they should have done so.

Moreover, the narration is completely incompatible with the style of speech of Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, which was extremely eloquent and mirrors the example of the Qur'an.

It is obvious that this tradition – considering all its details and dimensions – has been fabricated by one of the polemicists, for he disputes therein with the atheists who found fault with the style of the Qur'an, and has replied to them according to his own frame of mind and level of knowledge, attributing it to the Imām so that the lay people would accept it. The reason for this claim is that the author has used some terms which have become prevalent in later periods; for example, the title *Baqiyyat Allāh* (the Remaining [Proof] of Allah) for Imām al-Mahdī and the terms *fi'l al-māḍī* (past tense) and *fi'l al-muḍārī* (present/future tense), which were later coined by the grammarians.⁶⁹³

Regarding the words *kuntum khayra a'immah...* ('You are the best of Imāms...') (3:110), which Qummī has narrated with a chain of transmission, and mentioned in a *mursal* and fabricated narration in *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, Imām al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said: 'This verse was revealed in this way.' This has two possible meanings:

⁶⁹⁰ Preface of Tabarsī, *al-Ihtijāj*, v. 1.

⁶⁹¹ Ṭabaristān (or Tapuria) is the name of the former historic region in the Southern coasts of the Caspian Sea roughly in the location of the northern and southern slopes of the Elburz range in Iran, and roughly corresponding to the modern Iranian provinces of Mazandaran, Golestan and northern Semnan. [Trans.]

⁶⁹² Tafresh is an academic centre and the capital of Tafresh County, Markazi Province, Iran. [Trans.]

⁶⁹³ Ibid. 375.

1) The recitation is correct, for it is mentioned in 'Ayyāshī's *mursal* narration that it was like that in 'Alī's⁶⁹⁴ recitation, but as we said before in the discussion on recitations (*qirā'āt*), a difference in recitation has nothing to do with *tahrīf*. Moreover, it is impossible to establish verses or chapters of the Qur'an on the basis of a solitary report (*khabar al-wāḥid*), even if it has an authentic chain of transmission.

2) The comment is not about recitation, but to explain that the word *ummah* in this verse refers to the Imāms (*a'immaḥ*), because as stated in the tradition transmitted by Qummī, they have the main responsibility to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil (*al-amr bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahyi 'an al-munkar*).⁶⁹⁵

Therefore, *nuzūl* (revelation) in Imām al-Ṣādiq's statement refers to a suitable meaning according to the circumstances of the revelation, which is the real interpretation of the verse, as, for example, *tanzīl* is sometimes the opposite of *ta'wīl* and means *tafsīr* (exegesis or interpretation).

The second possibility seems more plausible because there are other traditions interpreting this verse.

Imām al-Ṣādiq has said:

It refers to the *ummah* to whom the supplication of Ibrāhīm (Abraham) was granted. It is the *ummah* whom God chose for him. They are the middle way and the best *ummah* ever evolved for mankind.

'Ayyāshī has quoted this narration in his exegesis, where he says:

We should place this verse alongside this other:

Let there arise from amongst you a nation (ummah) who invite to the good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong... (3:104) (because of the words from amongst you, the ummah refers to some of them).

We then realise that in both verses, what is meant by the *ummah* that enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong are the Imāms who are the leaders and forerunners of the *ummah*.

⁶⁹⁴ *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, 195.

⁶⁹⁵ *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 1, 110.

In response to the question: 'Is it incumbent upon the entire *ummaḥ* to bid what is right and forbid what is wrong?' Kulaynī has reported that Imām al-Ṣādiq replied in the negative. He was asked: 'What is the reason?' and he said: 'This is incumbent upon anyone who is strong, is obeyed, and is aware of what is right and what is wrong; but it is not obligatory for those who are weak and incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood.'

The Imām continues:

The basis of this claim is the noble verse, Let there arise from amongst you a nation who invite to the good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong (3:104), because the verse addresses a particular group and is not a general one. This is similar to the verse:

Amongst the people of Moses is a community who lead with truth and establish justice therewith (7:159).

It does not say: 'The nation of Moses, or all his people...' At the time, the people of Moses consisted of numerous nations. Moreover, the word *ummaḥ* can be applied to a single person or more. For example, God says:

Indeed, Abraham was a nation obedient to God (16:120).

It therefore follows that there is no harm in abandoning this obligation for anyone who does not have the necessary power, support and followers.⁶⁹⁶

We should note how the responsibility of the *ummaḥ* is placed on the leaders on the basis of the Qur'an and elegant reasoning.

From what has been said, it becomes clear that this tradition – however it may be interpreted – has nothing whatsoever to do with the issue of *tahrīf*.

Regarding the alleged deletion of the name of 'Alī from the verses of the 'perfection of religion' (*āyat al-kamāl*) and the 'verse of conveyance' (*āyat al-tablīgh*) (5:3, 67), 'Ayyāshī has reported that Imām al-Ṣādiq said:

On a Friday, Gabriel came to the Prophet in 'Arafāt, and said to him: 'O Muhammad! God sends His salutation to you and says: 'Say to your ummaḥ:

⁶⁹⁶ Baḥrānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, vol. 1, 307-308.

This day have I perfected your religion for you with the guardianship of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, and completed My favour unto you, and chosen for you as religion al-Islam' (5:3)."

According to Jazā'irī, the additional phrase has to be part of the verse in order to complete it. Kulaynī reported that Imām al-Bāqir said in the tradition of *farā'id*:

The verse of guardianship (*āyat al-wilāyah*) was revealed when Gabriel came down to the Prophet on a Friday in 'Arafāt and recited thus: 'This day have I perfected your religion for you, and completed My favour unto you' (5:3). The perfection of religion was realised with the guardianship of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.⁶⁹⁷

In this tradition, the Imām stipulates that the perfection of religion in the verse was materialised with the bestowal of the guardianship of Ali. On this basis, therefore, the verse directly indicates the guardianship of the Imām, which is not an incidental part of it.

Ḥākim Ḥasakānī has narrated that, regarding the tradition on the religious precepts, Imām al-Bāqir said:

Then Gabriel came down and said: 'God has ordered you to introduce to the people their guardian (*walī*) and leader (*imām*), just as you had conveyed to them [the decrees on] prayer, fasting and pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), so as to complete to them the argument in all of this.' The Prophet said: 'My people are close to the Age of Ignorance (*al-jāhiliyyah*), and rivalry and the seeking of glory are prevalent amongst them. There are none amongst them for whom the guardian (*walī*) is not unpleasant, and I am anxious.' Following that, God revealed this verse:

O Messenger, make known that which hath been revealed unto you from your Lord, for if thou do it not, thou wilt not have conveyed His message [that is, you will not have communicated it in full]. God will protect thee from mankind (5:67).⁶⁹⁸

The Imām added the words in parenthesis to explain the content of the verse. Based on numerous narrations, Jazā'irī supposed that the verse

⁶⁹⁷ Baḥrānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, vol. 1, 488, no. 1.

⁶⁹⁸ Ḥasakānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 191.

of conveyance (*āyat al-tablīgh*) was revealed as follows, with the addition of *fī 'Alī*, the omission of *min rabbik*, the changing of *wāw* to *fā* in *fa'inna*, and the plural form of *risālātah*:

'O Messenger, make known that which has been revealed unto you from your Lord *about 'Alī*; thus, for if thou do it not, thou wilt not have conveyed His messages.'

We have not come across this narration in the writings of Shī'a scholars, whether they were exegeses, books of merits (*kutub al-manāqib*) or *ḥadīth* compilations.

It is thus stated in *Tafsīr al-Qummī*: 'The verse *O Messenger, make known that which hath been revealed unto you from your Lord, for if thou do it not, thou wilt not have conveyed His message* was revealed concerning 'Alī.'⁶⁹⁹

In the exegesis of Fayḍ Kāshānī, it states:

The verse *O Messenger, make known that which hath been revealed unto you from your Lord* has been revealed concerning [the guardianship of] 'Alī, because the Imāms are reported to have said: 'It has thus been revealed.' That is, it has been revealed concerning the Imamate of 'Alī and his chieftainship (*imārah*).⁷⁰⁰

There are other such exegeses based on certain narrations.

Similarly, Ibn Shahrāshūb has also quoted *Tafsīr al-Tha'labī* in connection with the meaning of the verse, *O Messenger, make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from your Lord*, where Imām al-Bāqir mentioned the merit of 'Alī.⁷⁰¹

'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās is reported to have said: 'This verse has been revealed to express the right of 'Alī.' Tha'labī has also quoted Imām al-Bāqir as saying: 'The meaning of the verse is 'Make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from your Lord about 'Alī.' Therefore, the narrations concerning the verse of conveyance all agree that it concerns the right of 'Alī, but none of them say that the phrase *fī 'Alī* is an integral part of the verse. It is only 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd's recitation that states:

⁶⁹⁹ *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 1, 171.

⁷⁰⁰ Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfi fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, 456.

⁷⁰¹ See Bahṛānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, vol. 1, 490.

O Messenger, make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from your Lord that 'Alī is the master of the believers, and if thou do it not, thou wilt not have conveyed His message. God will protect thee from mankind (5:67).⁷⁰²

Ibn Mas'ūd says: 'We used to read this verse in that way during the lifetime of the Prophet.' Al-Suyūṭī has quoted this narration in his exegesis.⁷⁰³ Also, under the section 'What has been revealed from the Qur'an concerning the right of 'Alī,' 'Alī ibn 'Īsā Arbilī (d.693/1294) quotes the same thing from Ibn Mas'ūd on the authority of Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh.⁷⁰⁴

It was stated earlier that what Ibn Mas'ūd means by this is obviously the interpretation of the verse. He wanted to say that it used to be interpreted in that way during the lifetime of the Prophet.

What has been quoted so far are the most obvious attempts made by this group to prove the occurrence of *tahrīf* in the Qur'an, and Jazā'irī has cited the most important of them, claiming that there are many of them, and they are transmitted by *tawātur*. But none of them seems convincing.

...their deeds are like a mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man parched with thirst mistakes for water; until he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing (24:39).

All in all, the entire import of most of what is cited as proof of the occurrence of *tahrīf* depends on the narration on 'the deletion of one-third of the Qur'an within the third verse of *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, which, as stated earlier, is only mentioned by the author of *Al-Iḥtijāj*. Apart from the author's identity being unknown, the narration itself has no chain of transmission. Other ineffective arguments from this group will be cited while examining the statements of Muḥaddith Nūrī.

The Presumptions of the Author of *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*

Muḥaddith Nūrī wrote *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* with three introductory parts, twelve chapters and a long epilogue. In the twelve chapters he presents his arguments for the occurrence of *tahrīf*. What prompted him to write the book was that he thought that certain enemies had deleted passages

⁷⁰² Ḥasakānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 191.

⁷⁰³ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 2, 298.

⁷⁰⁴ Ali ibn 'Īsā Arbilī, *Kashf al-Ghummaḥ* (Tabrīz: 1381 q.), vol. 1, 319.

mentioning the merits of *Ahl al-Bayt* and the shortcomings of their adversaries from the Qur'an. By writing his book, he wanted to reply to certain scholars of India who had asked him why the names of *Ahl al-Bayt* were absent in the Qur'an.

In chapter nine, he deals with the names of *Ahl al-Bayt*, and how they would have been mentioned in the Old and New Testaments:

How can a fair-minded person suppose that God has not mentioned the names of the successors to the Seal of the Prophets and his daughter in the Book which is the Mother of all previous scriptures, and not introduced them to the *ummah*, the noblest of nations, when this is far more important than other obligations which are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an?

Thereafter he backs up his claim with a narration by the Jewish convert, Ka'b al-Aḥbār, who was under the patronage of Mu'āwiyah. Ka'b al-Aḥbār claimed to have read the dates of birth of *Ahl al-Bayt* in 72 books that were all allegedly sent down from Heaven, and in which it was said that, after the Prophet, they would be the best of creation and the divinely instituted leaders on earth. Muḥaddith Nūrī says: 'Ka'b mentioned this to Mu'āwiyah, who was not pleased with what he heard, and got up and left in anger...' ⁷⁰⁵

Prior to him, Jazā'irī had imagined the same thing. He says:

They have committed the most heinous crimes against religion; for example, altering the Qur'an by twisting its words, and deleting words of praise for *Ahl al-Bayt* and expositions against the hypocrites. ⁷⁰⁶

We should take a brief look at the proofs advanced by Muḥaddith Nūrī and discuss them to some extent. He says: 'Firstly, there was distortion of the Torah and the Evangel, and the similarity between past and present events necessitates the occurrence of *tahrīf* in the Qur'an.' ⁷⁰⁷

It was explained earlier that the distortions in the Torah and the Evangel were incorrect interpretations. Moreover, many original passages were deleted from, but what remained – as stipulated by the Qur'an –

⁷⁰⁵ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 183-184.

⁷⁰⁶ Sayyid Ni'matullāh Jazā'irī, *al-Anwār al-Nu'māniyyah* (Tabriz: Shirkat Printing Press, n.d.), vol. 1, 97.

⁷⁰⁷ See Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 35-95.

stayed intact up to the time of the Prophet's apostleship. What is meant by the 'similarity of the nations' is a similarity on principles of morality and social intercourse, notwithstanding any different acquired styles that fitted in with the particular circumstances of each period.

He continues thus:

Secondly, the styles adopted by the compilers of the Qur'an led to the oversight of certain words and verses, especially in view of the fact that a thorough comprehension of the Qur'an was impossible for anyone who had not compiled the Qur'an in its entirety during the lifetime of the Prophet.⁷⁰⁸

The three stages of the compilation the Qur'an from the time of apostleship up to the standardisation of the texts during the reign of 'Uthmān have been covered in detail, and it should be noted that two of these stages happened during the lifetime of the Prophet, namely, writing it down and the organisation of the verses. Only the arrangement of the chapters took place after the time of the Prophet, and did not by any means necessitate any changes.

Nūrī says:

Thirdly, the reason given by the Sunnīs to explain the narrations on *taḥrīf* that suggest abrogation of the recitation (*naskh al-tilāwah*) is false, because the narrations stipulate that many of the distortions were done by none other than 'Uthmān himself during his reign.⁷⁰⁹

It was mentioned before that these narrations have no credible basis, and are concoctions of the Ḥashwiyyah which found their way into the Sunnī books of *ḥadīth* out of negligence.⁷¹⁰

He adds: 'Fourthly, Imām 'Alī had his own manuscript, which must have differed from the other manuscripts.'⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid. 96-104.

⁷⁰⁹ See Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 105-120.

⁷¹⁰ See the previous chapter, which deals with the Ḥashwiyyah and their position on the issue of *taḥrīf*.

⁷¹¹ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 120-134.

Yes, as explained before, the Imām's manuscript differed from the others in the arrangement of the chapters and because it had explanations in the margins.⁷¹²

He also argues: 'Fifthly, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd also had his own personal manuscript.'⁷¹³ However, the difference between Ibn Mas'ūd's manuscript and the others was its recitation, and he would sometimes add explanations in order to clarify ambiguous points by substituting more recognisable synonyms for unfamiliar words. Amongst the salient features of his manuscript are the exclusion of the *mu'awwidhatān* (*Sūrah al-Falaq* and *Sūrah al-Nās*) on the assumption that they were supplications, and of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* on the basis that it is equal to the Qur'an rather than a part of it. These are the distinctive features of his manuscript. Be that as it may, he was not implying that there was any distortion (*tahrīf*) of the Qur'an.⁷¹⁴

Muḥaddith Nūrī continues: 'Sixthly, the manuscript of Ubayy ibn Ka'b had more verses than the existing manuscript.'⁷¹⁵ Yes, because Ubayy's manuscript included two supplications which he assumed to be chapters, which were known as *Sūrah al-Khal'* and *Sūrah al-Ḥafd*. And at the beginning of *Sūrah al-Zumar* he added the disjointed letters *ḥā' mīm*, which meant that there were a total of eight disjointed letters, contrary to the conventional number. Like Ibn Mas'ūd, he would sometimes also add some words of explanation in his manuscript. We have examined all of them before, and they have nothing at all to do with *tahrīf*.

He adds:

Seventhly, 'Uthmān has omitted certain words and verses from the manuscript which were incompatible with the continuity of his rulership. The two preceding caliphs did not omit them, and he redressed their negligence. There were also other motives that led him to make alterations and deletions. In addition, the differing manuscripts which 'Uthmān dispatched to cities far and wide are decisive proof of *tahrīf*.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹² See Ma'rifat, *al-Tamhīd*, vol. 1, 292-295.

⁷¹³ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 135-143.

⁷¹⁴ Ma'rifat, *al-Tamhīd*, vol. 1, 312-323.

⁷¹⁵ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 144-148.

⁷¹⁶ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 149-170.

In a bid to prove his assumptions, he resorts to the time of the Qur'an's compilation, its standardisation, and the dispatch of the manuscripts to the different cities during the reign of 'Uthmān, which all happened in the presence of the Companions and with their approval.⁷¹⁷ Yet, none of this is acceptable evidence that there were ever any distortions made by 'Uthmān or the two previous caliphs. It is unclear how Nūrī arrived at his conclusions concerning *tahṛīf* at the time of the compilation of the manuscripts, and interestingly enough, he himself sensed the weakness of his arguments by finally saying:

Although the certainty that the second compilation conforms to the first indicates a trust in the veracity of the scribes and their recordings, in our view this may not be enough, for the argument is nonetheless tenable, even though the claim of deleted verses requires the presentation of proof.⁷¹⁸

The process of the standardisation of the manuscripts has already been examined in detail,⁷¹⁹ and the conclusion was that it is certain that it did not entail any alteration to the text of the revelation. If ever there were any differences, it was to do with the handwriting styles. It thus becomes clear how weak the relationship is between differences in the manuscripts and the issue of *tahṛīf*.

He continues:

Eighthly, the narrations of Ahl al-Sunnah – transmitted by the Ḥashwiyyah and quoted by al-Suyūṭī in his book of exegesis and in *al-Itqān*, as well as by other *ḥadīth* scholars in their respective works – are a proof that substantiates the claim of *tahṛīf*.⁷²⁰

Some of these narrations have already been examined while dealing with the issue of *tahṛīf* according to the Ḥashwiyyah. As long as such

⁷¹⁷ It was previously mentioned that 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, had agreed in principle with the standardisation of the manuscripts, and Sayyid Raḍī al-Dīn ibn Ṭāwūs states in his book (*Sa'd al-Su'ūd*, 278) that 'Uthmān did so in the presence of the Imām.

⁷¹⁸ This phrase in itself shows that he was unsure of his evidence. See Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 153.

⁷¹⁹ See the previous chapter on the Ḥashwiyyah.

⁷²⁰ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 171-183.

narrations explicitly contradict the Qur'an and the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the Muslims, they have no credibility, whether in terms of the chains of transmission or of reasoning. Since all these narrations have already been examined, we will deal no more with them.

It is interesting to note that Muḥaddith Nūrī has quoted the fictitious *Sūrah al-Wilāyah* from the book *Dabistān-i Madhāhib* in toto,⁷²¹ considering it in this respect to be a narration of the adversaries. In the end, he tries to prove that this alleged *sūrah* has also been mentioned in Shī'a books. After quoting the text, he states:

The apparent indications in *Dabistān-i Madhāhib* are that this *sūrah* has been taken from Shī'a books, although I have found no trace of it there, except that Ibn Shahrāshūb – according to what has been said about him – has stated in *al-Mathālib* that they have deleted the entire *Sūrah al-Wilāyah* from the Qur'an. Perhaps he refers to this very *sūrah*. And God knows best.⁷²²

Al-Mathālib has already been discussed earlier.⁷²³

Nūrī also argues:

Ninthly, God, the Exalted, has mentioned the names of the successors of the Seal of the Prophets and the name of his daughter Lady Fāṭimah, as well as some of their characteristics, in all the blessed scriptures revealed to the previous prophets. He has done so either to favour those communities in such a way that they could seek their intercession to fulfil their needs and provide solutions to their problems, or in order to elevate their status and worth. By mentioning these names prior to the appearance of the Imāms, God may have wished to promote their standing. Nevertheless, how can a fair-minded person assume that God, the Exalted, neglects mention of their names in the Qur'an, which is superior to the other scriptures and will forever remain so? Why has He not introduced them to 'the nation of the Prophet,' who are the best of nations and most favoured by God? The mention of their names, pre-eminence and characteristics in the Qur'an is easier,

⁷²¹ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 179-180.

⁷²² Ibid. 180.

⁷²³ In the section on the assumptions of the Ḥashwīyah (item 18).

more evident and more important than the other obligations which are repeatedly mentioned therein.

He continues:

Although this argument may seem merely improbable, however, in reality it is based on complete induction or definitive realisation of the criterion (*tanqīḥ al-manāṭ*). ... This improbability is better than the improbable claim of those who deny *tahrīf* on the basis of the extent of the efforts made by the Companions to protect and preserve the Qur'an.

He also adds:

It is necessary for us to mention the documentary proof which consists of a number of narrations, one of which is that of the Jewish convert Ka'b al-Aḥbār, who claimed to have read in seventy-two heavenly scriptures of the births of the Prophet and his progeny.⁷²⁴

This narration was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

He has also reported another unlikely narration on the authority of Hishām Dastwā'ī, on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shimr, on the authority of Jābir al-Ju'fī from Sālim ibn 'Abdillāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. The report says that Sālim ibn 'Abdillāh told Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir of a narration while they were beside the Black Stone (*al-ḥajar al-aswad*) in Mecca, saying that his father, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, had told him:

I heard the Prophet saying: 'God, the Blessed and Exalted, revealed to me during the night of ascension (*mi'rāj*) the following: 'O Muhammad! Do you wish to see the names of the Imāms from amongst *Ahl al-Bayt*?' I said: 'Yes,' and He said: 'Look forward.' I did so, and I suddenly saw the names of 'Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Muhammad ibn 'Alī, Ja'far ibn Muhammad, Mūsā ibn Ja'far, 'Alī ibn Mūsā, Mūḥammad ibn 'Alī, 'Alī ibn Muhammad, Ḥasan ibn 'Alī and al-Ḥujjat al-Qā'im, which were like glowing stars. I said: 'O Lord! Who are they?' He said: 'They are the Imāms of the *ummah*.'

Jābir then says:

⁷²⁴ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 183-209.

Then, as Sālīm proceeded on his way, I followed him and said: 'I ask you to swear by God: was there anyone other than your father who told you of these names?' He said: 'It is not a tradition [directly heard] from the Prophet. Rather, along with my father, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, I was in the company of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, and I heard him saying: 'The Imāms of this *ummah* are the same in number as the chiefs (*nuqabā'*) of the Children of Israel.' At that time, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib came. Ka'b said: 'This is the first amongst them, and the other eleven will be from his descendants.' Thereafter, Ka'b recounted their names according to the Torah: Taqūbīt, Qaydhū, Dabīrā, Mafsūrā, Masmū'ā, Dūmūh, Mashyū, Hadhār, Yathmū, Baṭū, Nūqas and Qaydhmū.'

And Hishām Dastwā'ī says:

I met in Ḥīrah a Jewish man named 'Aththū ibn Awsū who was a famous learned man. He told me these names, saying: 'These are the Hebrew names and descriptions as mentioned in the Torah.' Then he interpreted each of them in this manner: 'Taqūbīt means 'the first executor of will (*waṣī*) for the last prophet'; Qaydhū means 'the second executor of will'; Dabīrā means 'the doyen of the martyrs'; Mafsūrā means 'the chief of the worshippers'; Masmū'ā means 'the inheritor of the knowledge of the first and the last'; Dūmūh means 'the truthful speaker of God'; Mashyū means 'the best of prisoners'; Hadhār means 'the one confined in a strange land'; Yathmū means 'the short-lived one with far-reaching impact'; Baṭū means 'the fourth name'; Nūqas means 'his uncle's namesake'; Qaydhmū means 'the hidden one who will rise up by the command of God.'⁷²⁵

In this way, the Ḥashwiyyah and the Akhbārīs joined forces to cite the testimony of Jewish converts who contributed to the confusion, and then circulated nonsensical narrations. We should remind the likes of Muḥaddith Nūrī not to spread falsehoods in a bid to substantiate their own assumptions:

⁷²⁵ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 191-192.

And be not like her who unravelleth the thread, after she hath made it strong... (16:92).

Here, disregarding the textual weakness of the two narrations, we shall examine their transmission. The first narration was transmitted by Muhammad ibn Sinān (a completely weak source – no tradition from him can be relied upon)⁷²⁶ on the authority of Abū al-Jārūd, then Ziyād ibn Mundhir, known as Surḥūb and the chief of Jārūdiyyah,⁷²⁷ from a Sunnī narrator, Layth ibn Sa'd, (94-175 AH). The *hadīth* is as follows:

Layth said that when Ka'b was in the presence of Mu'āwiyah [yet Mu'āwiyah died in 60 AH, 34 years before Layth was born], I asked him: 'How did you find the description of the birth of the Prophet in the books you have read? And did you find mention of the virtue of his progeny?' Ka'b turned to Mu'āwiyah in order to share his view. God let the following flow from his tongue... [and so on].

It is clear that this story was fabricated by Abū al-Jārūd. Abū 'Amr Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz Kashshī says:

Abū al-Jārūd was known as Surḥūb. The Surḥūbiyyah, a derivative of the Zaydiyyah, is attributable to him. Imām al-Bāqir would call him by this name. It is said that Surḥūb is the name of a blind devil that lives in the sea. Abū al-Jārūd was both literally and figuratively blind.⁷²⁸

Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī says: 'Our scholars have disowned the narrations which Muhammad ibn Sinān has transmitted from him.'⁷²⁹

The second narration was transmitted by the author of *Muqtaḍab al-Athar*, Abū 'Abdillāh Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ayyāsh al-Jawharī,⁷³⁰ on

⁷²⁶ According to al-Najāshī in his *rijāl*, vol. 2, 208.

⁷²⁷ Jārūdiyyah is an offshoot of Zaydiyyah.

⁷²⁸ Abū 'Amr Muhammad ibn 'Umar Kashshī, *Ikhtiyār Ma'rifat al-Rijāl*, (*Rijāl al-Kāshshī*), Najaf Edition, n.d., 199, no. 104.

⁷²⁹ Muhammad ibn Ali Ardabīlī, *Jāmi' al-Ruwāt* (Qum: Maktabah Muṣṭafawī, n.d.), vol. 1, 339.

⁷³⁰ He and his father were amongst the prominent figures in Baghdad. He was credited with many works, but during the latter part of his life, he suffered from a mental disturbance and passed away in 401/1010. Najāshī says: 'Our sheikhs have identified

the authority of Thawābah al-Mawṣilī, on the authority of Abū 'Arūbah al-Ḥarrānī, on the authority of Mūsā ibn 'Isā al-Ifrīqī (all of whom were unknown), on the authority of Hishām ibn Sanbar Dastwā'ī (who was one of the great Sunnī traditionists and regarded by al-Ṭayālāsī as the foremost in *ḥadīth*),⁷³¹ on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shimr ibn Yazīd (who was weak in *ḥadīth*). The latter transmitted the book of Jābir and added certain things to it. For this reason, the narrations of Jābir transmitted through him are regarded as doubtful.⁷³²

'Allāmah Ḥillī says: 'I do not trust any of his narrations.'⁷³³ And he narrated the tradition from Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju'fī who himself is reliable. However, Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī says: 'Most of the narrators [who narrated] from him were weak.' Najāshī says: 'A group that was weak and would be taunted narrated from him who himself was eclectic.' 'Allāmah Ḥillī also says: 'In my opinion, it is better for us to suspend our judgment on whatever the group which included 'Amr ibn Shimr would narrate through him.'⁷³⁴

It is evident that the source of the problems with this tradition stem from 'Amr ibn Shimr, who fabricated it by quoting Jābir al-Ju'fī. Jābir transmitted the tradition from Sālim ibn 'Abdillāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 106/724), who was one of the seven great jurists (*fuqahā'*) of Medina. His mother was the daughter of Yazdigerd, who was one of the Persian captives whom 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, offered in marriage to 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, while her sister was given in marriage to the Imām's own son, Imām Ḥusayn, from whom was born Imām 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. Another of her sisters was offered in marriage to Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, from whom was born Qāsim ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr. The Imām assumed the custody of these three sisters.⁷³⁵

The fact that 'Amr ibn Shimr has attributed this tradition to the grandson of 'Umar is intentionally confusing. The rest of the chains

him as weak (*ḍa'īf*); hence, we do not narrate from him.' See Sheikh 'Abdullāh Māmaqānī, *Tanqīḥ al-Maqāl* (Qum: lithograph, 1350), vol. 1, no. 517, 88.

⁷³¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 11, 43.

⁷³² *Rijāl al-Najāshī*, vol. 2, 132.

⁷³³ 'Allāmah Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn Muṭahhar Ḥillī, *al-Rijāl* (Najaf Edition, Qum: Khayyām, 1381 q.), 242.

⁷³⁴ Ardabīlī, *Jāmi' al-Ruwāt*, vol. 1, 144.

⁷³⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 3, 438.

of transmissions upon which Nūrī has relied are of the same nature; hence, we shall refrain from repeating them. A structure built on shaky foundations is worthless, and explicit mention of the names of *Ahl al-Bayt* in the Torah and the Evangel has not been demonstrated and is therefore a false claim.

The tenth proof which Muḥaddith Nūrī cites for proving the occurrence of *tahrīf* is variation in the recitations. He says:

Without doubt, the reciters disagreed over many words of the Qur'an, and the forms of the words. This is while the Qur'an has been revealed with identical words [and language] without any change and variance, [but] since the existing manuscript is not devoid of some of these incorrect recitations, and even most of its words are not in conformity with the revelation, our point that it lacks total conformity with what has been revealed is established.

He adds:

Although this is sufficient proof of the deletion of a *sūrah*, a verse or even a word, since the reciters do not differ in such cases, by applying the rule of 'the absence a third stance' ('*adam al-qawl bi al-faṣl*'),⁷³⁶ one can make the claim.⁷³⁷

We have discussed in detail the famous reciters and recitations, and stated that there is no necessary relationship between the issue of the various recitations and the wider transmission (*tawātur*) of the Qur'an, for the Qur'an and the different recitations are two different things. The Qur'an is a *mutawātir* (widely transmitted) text that was revealed to the Prophet and preserved unchanged by the forerunners of religion and the Muslim people throughout the ages. The recitations, however, are a matter of *ijtihād* and personal opinion regarding the interpretation of the text and the manner of reciting it.

⁷³⁶ This refers to a rule based on the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Here he means that those who believe in *tahrīf* say that *tahrīf* has occurred throughout the Qur'an, while those who deny it say that no *tahrīf* has ever occurred in the Qur'an. So there is no specific division between the two cases. Technically, it is called 'compound consensus.'

⁷³⁷ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 209-233.

It should be stated that the principle of 'the absence a third stance' (*'adam al-qawl bi al-faṣl*) does not apply in this case, since it concerns the application of the principles of jurisprudence to speculation, but not to revealed sciences which are founded on examination and evaluation. We shall now examine Nūrī's most significant proofs, the eleventh and twelfth.

The Most Important Proof for the Notion of *Tahrīf*

Perhaps, the most important support for the proponents of *tahrīf* is a set of scattered narrations collected from different sources, which according to them, stipulate the issue of *tahrīf* either in general terms or in particular instances which explicitly indicate places where *tahrīf* has occurred. Muḥaddith Nūrī has cited as his eleventh proof narrations which indicate *tahrīf* in general terms, and those which indicate *tahrīf* in particular instances as his twelfth proof. He collected these narrations from different sources, most of which have no credibility, the rest being nothing at all to do with *tahrīf*. Interestingly enough, Nūrī challenged his opponents by relying on the extent of his research and his acquisition of references known only to a few. In exposing Sayyid Baghdādī – who says in *Sharḥ al-Wāfiyah*: 'No one has brought forth reports on *tahrīf* except those who have narrated accounts of fatalism (*jabr*), delegation (*tafwīḍ*) and other matters contrary to religion' – Nūrī says: 'There is no fault in Sayyid Baghdādī saying this, because, due to the paucity of books at his disposal, his research was insufficient.'⁷³⁸

Hujjat Balāghī says:

According to his own assumptions, Muḥaddith Nūrī has tried to collect a large number of narrations on *tahrīf* by increasing the number of *musnad*⁷³⁹ narrations by adding *mursal* narrations, which are essentially derived from the same *musnad* narrations. Amongst these *mursal* traditions are those of 'Ayyāshī, Furāt and others. In addition to that, a significant number of the chains of transmission of his *musnad* narrations go back to a few narrators who have been subjected to criticism in *rijāl* biographies. Some of these narrators are liars, and so corrupt and despicable that

⁷³⁸ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 350.

⁷³⁹ *Musnad* literally means 'supported'; a tradition supported by a known chain of transmission that goes all the way back to the Prophet. [Trans.]

narrating from them is not permissible. Some are also staunch enemies of *Ahl al-Bayt*. It is evident that most of these narrations are of no benefit.⁷⁴⁰

The most important sources from which Muḥaddith Nūrī has taken narrations follow on.

Unreliable Books Cited by Muḥaddith Nūrī

1) *A treatise of unknown origin*. One of the books relied upon by those who subscribe to the notion of *tahrīf* is a treatise of unknown origin with different titles attributed to various persons. It is sometimes identified as *Risālah al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*, and attributed to Sa'd ibn 'Abdillāh al-Ash'arī (d. 301/913); as *Mā Warada fī Ṣunūf al-Qur'ān*, attributed to Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nu'mānī (d. 360/971); or as *Risālah al-Muḥkam wa al-Mutashābih*, attributed to Sayyid Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044).⁷⁴¹

It must be pointed out that a treatise such as this – with an unknown author, an inauthentic chain of transmission, and unrecognised by scholars – cannot be treated as a reference for narrations, except by the likes of Muḥaddith Nūrī who seems to have been clutching at straws in order to fill the pages of his book *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*. The other references that were used are no better.

2) *Al-Ṣaqīfah* by Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī (d. 90/709). Sulaym was one of the much-loved companions of 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful. He wrote a book containing some of the secrets of the Imamate (*imāmah*) and guardianship (*wilāyah*), which was one of the most precious books amongst the Shī'a at that time, although many researchers have doubted the veracity of the existing manuscript.

⁷⁴⁰ See Balāghī, *Ālā' al-Raḥmān*, preface, 26.

⁷⁴¹ This book is also attributed to Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ḥamzah al-Baṭā'inī who was one of the leaders of the Wāqifiyyah sect, because, based on a statement by Najāshī (*al-Rijāl*, vol. 1, 133), he had a treatise entitled *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* in which his chains of transmission are the same as those mentioned in the introduction to the treatise of Nu'mānī. But this is improbable, because it is possible that both Nu'mānī and Najāshī took it from a single book, and Nu'mānī reported from this treatise a narration attributed to Imām al-Ṣādiq which ended with the phrase *faḍḍalū wa aḍallū*. Therefore, there is no reason for attributing the entire treatise of Nu'mānī to him, and granted that it belongs to Baṭā'inī, his citation of him is no better than others.

Shaykh Mufīd says:

This book cannot be relied upon. It is not permissible to act upon most of its contents, for it is marred with errors and guile. It is inappropriate for any devout person to act upon anything it says, and one should refrain from relying upon it or narrating its traditions.⁷⁴²

This scepticism is due to the fact that Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafī pursued him in order to shed his blood, but he escaped and sought refuge in Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh (Fīrūz). Upon his death, he offered the book to Abān as a reward for his favour. In his *al-Khulāṣah*, 'Allāmah states that: 'The book of Sulaym has been transmitted from Abān, and only through him.'

Abān was one of the Followers (*tābi'ūn*) and a companion of Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq. In his book on *rijāl*, Shaykh Ṭūsī considers him 'weak' (*ḍa'īf*). Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī also says of him: 'He is weak and unworthy of attention.' Our scholars have accused Abān of altering Sulaym's book by making additions, and some have even attributed the book to Abān himself. Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī says: 'Our scholars attribute the book of Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī to Abān.'

Shaykh Ṭūsī reports that the book of Sulaym passed through two channels, namely, from Ḥammād ibn 'Īsā and 'Uthmān ibn 'Īsā, on the authority of Abān, from Sulaym; and through Ḥammād on the authority of Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar al-Yamānī, on the authority of Abān, from Sulaym.

The esteemed teacher, Ayatollah Khoī says:

The Shaykh's tracking (*ṭarīq*) of Sulaym's book through both chains of transmission is weak. The Shaykh says: 'We have no access to the book of Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī as narrated through Ḥammād ibn 'Īsā, for in this channel is Abū Samīnah, and Muhammad ibn 'Alī al-Ṣayrafi who is weak as well as fraudulent.'

This book is well known for containing diverse manuscripts, and perhaps its transfer from one scribe to another over the course of time made it susceptible to modifications stemming from different outlooks and ways of thinking – something which might happen with any author who fails to publish his book himself during his lifetime.

Muḥaqqiq Tehrānī says:

⁷⁴² Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ l'tiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, 149-150.

I have discovered that various manuscripts of this book differed in three ways: the chains of transmission mentioned at the beginning of the manuscripts; the order and arrangement of the traditions; and in the number of the traditions.

Another aspect mentioned by some researchers in the introduction to the book is as follows: many traditions are reported on the authority of Sulaym, and narrated by 'Allāmah Majlisī in the various volumes of *Biḥār al-Anwār*, as well as by other great figures in their own books (such as Kulaynī, Shaykh Ṣadūq, 'Allāmah Ḥillī in his abridgment of *Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in *'Uyūn al-Mu'jizāt*, Ṣaffār in *Baṣā'ir*, and others). However, none of these traditions is reflected in the present manuscripts of Sulaym's book. Many of them were narrated through other than Abān or directly through Sulaym himself, and this in itself affirms Abān's interpolation in Sulaym's book. In conclusion, it must be noted that this book is made up of discontinuous parts, for it repeatedly states: 'I heard from Abān ibn Abī 'Ayyāsh, on the authority of Sulaym ibn Qays...' Therefore, it is most probable that it was altered and added to by Abān, who himself set it out in its present form with some additions or deletions. It is therefore more accurate to attribute the book – as it is in its present condition – to Abān rather than Sulaym, even though the original was that of Sulaym. As such, one must not attribute the unlikely accounts in the book to Sulaym.

In short, what Shaykh Mufīd said in his masterful research on this book is correct. As mentioned above, the Shaykh said:

This book cannot be relied upon. It is not permissible to act upon most of its contents, for it is marred with errors and guile. It is inappropriate for any devout person to act upon anything it says, and one should refrain from relying upon it or narrating its traditions.⁷⁴³

3) *Qirā'āt* by Aḥmad ibn Muhammad al-Sayyārī (d. 268/881).⁷⁴⁴

The Shaykh says: 'Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Sayyār al-Kātib was one of the scribes of Āl Ṭāhir (the Ṭāhirites). He is weak in narration,

⁷⁴³ See Khoī, *Mu'jamu Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 1, 141-142; vol. 8, 216-228; Tehrānī: *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 2, 152-159; al-Hilālī, *Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays*, preface, 19-39; Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 321.

⁷⁴⁴ A critical edition of this book has recently been published with a detailed introduction by Etan Kohlberg and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *Revelation and Falsification: The Kitāb al-Qirā'at of Ahmad B. Muhammad Al-Sayyari*, Brill, 2008.

irreligious and many of his traditions do not have a continuous chain of transmission (*kathīr al-marāsīl*).'

Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī says of him: 'He is extremely weak, an extremist and a distorter.' Muhammad ibn 'Alī ibn Maḥbūb has also said in *al-Nawādir al-Muṣannafah* that he believed in the transmigration of the soul.⁷⁴⁵ As Shaykh Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥillī stated in *Mukhtaṣar Baṣā'ir al-Darajāt*, this book is better known as *al-Tanzīl wa al-Taḥrīf* (Revelation and Distortion), and this title is closer to the content of the book than the title that refers to recitations.

Muḥaddith Nūrī had a copy of it at his disposal, and quoted from it in *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*.⁷⁴⁶

In their books of *ḥadīth*, the *ḥadīth* scholars (*muḥaddithūn*) of Qum used to delete all the narrations transmitted by al-Sayyār.

4) The *Tafsīr* of Abū al-Jārūd Ziyād ibn Mundhir, better known as Surḥūb (died 150/767).

We mentioned earlier that he was the leader of the Jārūdiyyah also known as the Surḥūbīyyah. Kashshī says: 'Abū al-Jārūd was both literally and figuratively blind.'

It is narrated that Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'May God curse him! He was blind and had no insight.' Muhammad ibn Sinān has said of him: 'Abū al-Jārūd drank wine before his death and submitted to the guardianship of the unbelievers.'⁷⁴⁷ His *Tafsīr* is as Abū Sahl Kathīr ibn 'Ayyāsh al-Qaṭṭān narrated from him. The Shaykh and Najāshī's channel (*ṭarīq*) in Abū al-Jārūd's *Tafsīr* ends up with Abū Sahl, and the Shaykh says: 'Abū Sahl is weak.'⁷⁴⁸

5) The *Tafsīr* of 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. 329/941)

It was pointed out before that this exegesis (*tafsīr*) is attributed to him, but not his own writing. In reality, it is a blend of his own dictations to his student, Abū al-Faḍl 'Abbās ibn Muhammad al-'Alawī into which a considerable portion of Abū al-Jārūd's *Tafsīr* was inserted by Abū al-Faḍl, and then supplemented with narrations of his own. He wrote an

⁷⁴⁵ Khoī, *Mu'jamu Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 2, 282-284.

⁷⁴⁶ Tehrānī, *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 7, 322.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 267.

⁷⁴⁸ Khoī, *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 7, 322.

introduction in which he brought in a few narrations on the verses of the Qur'an attributed to 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful.

Abū al-Faḍl al-'Alawī took from his teacher al-Qummī narrations from Imām al-Ṣādiq ('a) which were in his exegesis of the Qur'an, as well as Abū al-Jārūd's *Tafsīr* as transmitted from Imām al-Bāqir. And in order to enhance the benefit of the book, he has added other narrations on *ḥadīth* from his own sheikhs. Therefore, *Tafsīr al-Qummī* is a blend of narrations from al-Qummī and Abū al-Jārūd and other narrations transmitted by Abū al-Faḍl himself.

From what we have said, it becomes clear that this exegesis – in its present form – was composed by Abū al-Faḍl al-'Alawī. Yet, since for the narrations he has benefited more from his teacher, al-Qummī, he has attributed the book to him. Muḥaqqiq Tehrānī says: 'Abū al-Faḍl's interpolation includes the main body of the Qur'an, that is, from the beginning of *Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān* up to the end of the Qur'an.'

⁷⁴⁹

This exegesis commences with: 'Abū al-Faḍl 'Abbās ibn Muhammad ibn al-Qāsim ibn Ḥamzah ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far narrated to us that 'Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm narrated to...'

There are two unknown persons here: the one who narrated from Abū al-Faḍl al-'Alawī,⁷⁵⁰ and Abū al-Faḍl himself, because none of the authors of the biographies of narrators mention anything about him. The only available information about him is that he was one of the grandchildren of Ḥamzah, the son of Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far. He was an 'Alawī (descendant of Imām 'Alī) and might possibly have been one of the students of 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī. And so, just as the identity of the first person and his genealogy are unknown, Abū al-Faḍl 'Abbās al-'Alawī is unmentioned in the books of *rijāl*. Therefore, since the chains of transmission are interrupted, or what is technically called *majhūl* (unknown), the exegesis has no credibility in the eyes of *ḥadīth* scholars.

6) *Al-Istighāthah* by 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Kūfī (d. 352/963).

⁷⁴⁹ Tehrānī, *al-Dhārī'ah*, vol. 4, 302-303.

⁷⁵⁰ The contemporary scholar Ayatollah Sayyid Mūsā Zanjānī supposes that the one who said, '...narrated a tradition for me' was a person named 'Alī ibn Ḥātim ibn Abū Ḥātim al-Qazwīnī, who was one of the weak narrators. He has narrated much, because all of those from whom he has narrated were included in the chains of transmission of this exegesis. It is evident, therefore, that the first narrator of the exegesis from Abū al-Faḍl was the same 'Alī ibn Ḥātim.

According to Najāshī:

He himself claimed that he was amongst the Ṭālibiyyūn (descendants of Abū Ṭālib). In the later part of his life, he inclined toward extremism (*ghuluww*) and his faith (*madhhab*) was corrupted. He wrote an ample number of books, but most of them are superficial and worthless. As the Shaykh said, this book (*al-Istighāthah*) is of this type. The Shaykh says: 'He was an Imāmī and on the right track, writing good books such as *al-Awṣiyā*, and one on *fiqh* in the style of al-Muzanī. In the end, however, he was drawn toward deviation and eclecticism, propagating the School of the Five Persons and writing a book on *ghuluww* and eclecticism.'

Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī says: 'He was a liar, an extremist and an innovator (in religion). I have seen many of his books which are not worthy of attention.'

'Allāmah Ḥillī says:

What *takhmīs* (the dividing into five parts) means for the extremists (*ghulāt*) is that Salmān al-Fārsī, Miqdād, 'Ammār, Abū Dharr and 'Amr ibn Umayyah have been deputed by God to manage the universe.

Moreover, the esteemed teacher, Ayatollah Khoī, says: 'The Shaykh's channel down to him is unknown.'⁷⁵¹

7) *Al-Ihtijāj* by Ṭabrisī.

It was stated earlier that the book of this name is attributed to Ṭabrisī (Ṭabris is the Arabic form of Tafresh⁷⁵²). However, the identity of this Tabrisī is not clear. In the introduction, Sayyid Muhammad Baḥr al-'Ulūm gives six names of prominent persons to whom this book is possibly attributed:

- 1) Abū Maṣṣūr, Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ṭabrisī (died 620 AH). In *Kashf al-Maḥajjah*, Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs has attributed this book to him.
- 2) Abū 'Alī, Faḍl ibn Ḥasan ibn Faḍl al-Ṭabrisī (d. 548/1153), the author of *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*, whom Muḥaddith Astarābādī and Ibn Abī Jumhūr al-Aḥsā'ī, the author of 'Awālī, considered likely.
- 3) Abū Naṣr, Ḥasan ibn Faḍl ibn Ḥasan, the author of *Makārim al-Akhlāq* and son of Amīn al-Islām al-Ṭabrisī, the author of *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*.

⁷⁵¹ Khoī, *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 11, 246-247.

⁷⁵² A city in the central region of Iran, 222 kilometres south-west of Tehran.

4) Abū Faḍl, 'Alī ibn Ḥasan ibn Faḍl, grandson of the author of *Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayān*. He wrote *Nathar al-Li'ālī* and *Mishkāt al-Anwār* as supplements to his father's work, i.e. *Makārim al-Akhlāq*.

5) Abū 'Alī, Muhammad ibn Faḍl al-Ṭabrisī, who was one of the students of Shaykh Muḥid.

6) Abū 'Alī, Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Muhammad al-Ṭabrisī, a contemporary of Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.

Regarding the book itself, however, it must be pointed out that its traditions are *mursal* and without chains of transmission, and most of them are a blend of transmitted narrations and rational arguments. However, one can only rely on the arguments but not on their chains of transmission. For this reason, the scholars have not relied on the transmissions of the narrations themselves, but focussed attention on the rationality of the text. This necessarily affects the book's status as a historical *ḥadīth* document, and perhaps for this reason the author intentionally left his name undisclosed. He gives his motive for writing the book as teaching the Shī'a a method of convincing argumentation and to encourage them. To this end, he has brought together debates on various aspects of the religion, which he has attributed to prominent figures to back this up. He says:

We have not given the chains of transmission of most of the traditions we mention. This is either because there is a consensus on them, that they conform with rational argument, or on account of their fame in the biographies and *ḥadīth* collections.

Therefore, this book is more akin to a book of scholastic theology (*kalām*) than one of *ḥadīth* or history, since the rational argumentation outnumbers the narrations. Amongst these many debates the author cites the reply to an atheist who had supposed that the Qur'an contained contradictions.

He has attributed this dialogue to 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful, whilst most probably it was a hypothetical case which he used to teach how to argue and reason well, even though some narrations are included here and there in the argument. For this reason, he is the only one to

have quoted this narration with such elaboration and in such a disorderly arrangement.⁷⁵³

8) *Tafsīr* attributed to Imām Ḥasan al-'Askarī.

This exegesis is partial and broken, containing an exegesis of *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* and most of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* up to verse 282 – the longest in the Qur'an – where there is the phrase:

The witnesses should not refuse when they are called (2:282).

It was compiled by two authors who, according to Shaykh Ṣadūq, are identified as Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf ibn Muhammad ibn Ziyād and Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muhammad ibn Sayyār. According to the authors, it was dictated to them by Imām Ḥasan al-'Askarī over the course of seven years, when they would frequently meet with the Imām and write down whatever he would say in relation to the Qur'an. The authors were sons of rich men of Astarābād⁷⁵⁴ whose properties were confiscated by Emir Dā'ī ilā al-Ḥaqq, the leader of the Zaydiyyah in Astarābād. Their parents went with their families to Iraq and entered Sāmarrā'. The Imām accepted them and prayed for prosperity in their works. After receiving the good news of the retrieval of their properties, they went to the Imām and asked for his permission to return to their home town Astarābād. The Imām asked them to let their two sons stay with him in order to acquire knowledge, and they complied. These two sons committed themselves to being in the presence of the Imām for seven years, and they would regularly visit him every day in his house.

Abū al-Ḥasan Muhammad ibn Qāsim al-Khaṭīb, better known as *Mufasssīr* Astarābādī (the exegete of Astarābād), has narrated from these two persons, and this is the channel Abū Ja'far al-Ṣadūq used for this exegesis.⁷⁵⁵

However, the reliability of Khaṭīb Astarābādī has not been established. In addition, the status of Abū Ya'qūb and Abū al-Ḥasan – the transmitters

⁷⁵³ Ṭabrisī, *al-Ihtijāj*, vol. 1, 358-384. The tradition about the alleged contradictory verses – briefly, yet referenced with chains of transmission – can be found in al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd*, 255-270, and Majlisī has mentioned both of them in *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 9, 98, 127-142.

⁷⁵⁴ Astarābād, the former name of Gorgan, the capital of Golestan province in the north of modern-day Iran. [Trans.]

⁷⁵⁵ Tehrānī, *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 4, 285.

of the exegesis – is also unknown. Hence, all three of the sources of this book are virtually unknown.

Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī says in this regard:

Muhammad ibn Qāsim *Mufasssir* Astarābādī is weak and a liar. Abū Ja'far has reported from him an exegesis through the transmission of two unknown persons. The exegeses of Sahl Dībājī from his father is also a fabrication full of inadmissible and unbelievable traditions.

The esteemed teacher, Ayatollah Khoī, says:

Muhammad ibn Qāsim has not been relied upon by any of the predecessors, including al-Ṣadūq, who narrates much from him. Ibn al-Ghaḍā'irī considers him weak, and scholars of later periods such as 'Allāmah, Sayyid Dāmād and others also regard him as weak... In reality, this person is of unknown character. Neither his reliability nor his weakness has been proven to us. And a plenitude of al-Ṣadūq's transmissions from him, especially in his books other than *al-Faḡīh*, does not prove his reliability. At any rate, the exegesis attributed to Imām 'Askarī through his transmission has not been established.⁷⁵⁶

Ayatollah Khoī continues:

In addition, anyone who cares to take a look at this exegesis would entertain no doubts about its falsity, because writing such a book is not worthy of an erudite scholar, let alone an Imām who is the proof of God over His creation.⁷⁵⁷

9) Exegeses (*tafāsīr*) whose chains of transmission are broken.

Several famous scholars have written some advanced exegeses whose original manuscripts are unfortunately mainly lost, leaving extant only parts without a chain of transmission. In many instances, the traditions therein are disorderly and have interpolations, which put into question the genuineness of most of them. Here we shall mention some examples:

- a) The exegesis of Abū Naṣr Muhammad ibn Mas'ūd ibn 'Ayyāsh Salāmī Samarqandī (d. 320/932), better known as *Tafṣīr al-'Ayyāshī*. For the

⁷⁵⁶ Khoī, *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 17, 156-157.

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid. vol. 12, 147.

sake of brevity, some scribes have omitted the chains of transmission of the narrations contained within it.

'Allāmah Majlisī says:

Whoever omitted these chains of transmission has offered an excuse worse than sin. He gives as his excuse: 'I looked at the chains of transmission of this exegesis and I liked them. I looked for the one who might have heard it from the author or somebody else. Yet I did not find anyone who heard it personally or was granted permission by the author to narrate it. Therefore, I omitted the chains of transmission and wrote the rest as it was, for it to be easy for the scribes and readers. If I later find someone who heard it or was granted permission by the author to narrate it, I will mention the chains of transmission the way they were written by the author.

Majlisī adds:

Yet, from this fragmented exegesis, only half of it – up to the end of *Sūrah al-Kahf* – has survived.⁷⁵⁸

b) The exegesis of Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Furāt al-Kūfī (d. circa 300/913), who has restricted himself to narrations transmitted from the Imāms and reported much from Ḥusayn ibn Sa'īd al-Kūfī al-Ahwāzī who was a resident of Qum, where he died, and was a companion of Imām Ridā, Imām Jawād and Imām Hādī. He has also narrated from Ja'far ibn Muhammad Fazārī and 'Ubayd ibn Kathīr al-'Āmirī as well as from his other teachers (who were more than a hundred, all of whom were narrators of our traditions). But neither the names nor descriptions of most of these people are mentioned in our books of *rijāl*. There is no mention of Furāt himself, either positive or negative.

Muḥaqqiq Tehrānī says:

It is very regrettable that some have intentionally omitted most of these chains of transmission and satisfied themselves with less significant phrases such as 'Furāt, on the authority of Ḥusayn

⁷⁵⁸ See Tehrānī, *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 4, 295.

ibn Sa'īd *mu'an'anan*,⁷⁵⁹ on the authority of so-and-so.' Also, in place of the chains of transmission, by mentioning *mu'an'anan*, he wanted to say that a narration was *musnad* and *mu'an'an*, but for the sake of brevity, he omitted the chains.⁷⁶⁰

c) The exegesis of Muhammad ibn 'Abbās Māhyār, better known as Ibn Ḥajjām (d. circa 330/942.). He was righteous and reliable, and has written a book entitled *Mā Nazala min al-Qur'ān fī Ahl al-Bayt*. Najāshī says:

A group of our associates say that no such book has been written so far on this subject. It is said that this book had a thousand pages.⁷⁶¹

The Shaykh's channel for this book is correct, but none of the succeeding researchers has seen this exegesis. The apparent meaning of Najāshī's statement suggests that he himself had not seen the book, and quoted what others had said concerning its size.

Muḥaqqiq Tehrānī says:

In the book *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt al-Zāhirah*, Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn, the student of al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī (d. 940/1534), has narrated from him. Therefore, it is evident that this book was extant until that time, but afterwards no one knew of its whereabouts.

Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn quotes a group of our scholars as saying that no book of this kind has ever been written, and adds:

I have only seen half of this book, but not its entirety; from the following verse up to the end of the Qur'an:

And they indeed strove hard to beguile thee away from that wherewith We have inspired thee, that thou shouldst invent other than it against Us... (17:73).⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁹ The expression *mu'an'an* is a term which means 'So-and-so narrated on the authority of so-and-so, on the authority of so-and-so.'

⁷⁶⁰ Tehrānī, *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 4, 298.

⁷⁶¹ Khoī, *Mu'jam Rijāl al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 16, 198.

⁷⁶² Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Ali Astarābādī, *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt al-Zāhirah* (Qum: Amīr Printing Press, 1407 q.), vol. 1, 284.

'Alī ibn Ṭāwūs has narrated from him in the treatise *Muḥāsabat al-Nafs*, and as stated in *al-Yaqīn* that the book under discussion was, according to him, complete, saying that it is in ten parts in two large volumes. Ibn Ṭāwūs says: 'He has reported its narrations through the channel of great Sunnī figures to provide convincing proofs.' Muḥaqqiq Tehrānī says: 'In *al-Yaqīn* Ibn Ṭāwūs has quoted narrations from both of its volumes.'⁷⁶³

But Muḥaddith Nūrī was confused on this point. In *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt al-Bāhirah* he has reported narrations from Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn al-Najafī which apparently indicate the occurrence of *taḥrīf* by supposing that they are an integral part of *Tafsīr Māhyār*.⁷⁶⁴ This error is strange, because it was Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Astarābādī who narrated from *Tafsīr Māhyār* in the book *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt al-Zāhirah*. We should bear in mind that *Ta'wīl al-Āyāt al-Bāhirah* is the Persian translation of Sharaf al-Dīn's book which, as mentioned at the end of the book,⁷⁶⁵ was written by Shaykh Muhammad Taqī, better known as Āqānajaḥ al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1332/1914), who was an outstanding and influential personality of his time in Iṣfahān. The beginning of the book, as well as the title given to it by the publishers, has led some people to assume that the book was written by him. This has confused many people, just as it has Muḥaddith Nūrī.⁷⁶⁶

We shall briefly examine the narrations which Muḥaddith Nūrī supposed were indicative of *taḥrīf*, some of which indicate *taḥrīf* in general terms, while others specify particular instances.

Seven Groups of Narrations Cited by Muḥaddith Nūrī

There are over a thousand of these narrations (1,122 to be exact), 61 of which in his view indicate the general occurrence of *taḥrīf*, and 1,061 which do so explicitly. However, he has taken most of these narrations from unreliable sources, such as were mentioned earlier. They are either of unknown origin, fragmentary, fabricated or unsubstantiated. This amounts to 815 narrations, and if these as discounted, there is a remainder

⁷⁶³ Tehrānī, *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 3, no. 1129, 303-304; vol. 19, 29-30.

⁷⁶⁴ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, no. 14, 237-238, from proof 11 and elsewhere. Before him, the author of *Amal al-Amal* had made the same mistake and the author of *al-Riyāḍ* has charged him with it. See Tehrānī, *al-Dharī'ah*, vol. 3, 305.

⁷⁶⁵ Where it states: 'I finished transcribing this book on the night of Friday, Jumādā al-Awwal 13, 1297 q.'

⁷⁶⁶ The same error has occurred in Nūrī Ṭabrisī, *Mustadrak al-Wasā'il*, vol. 1, 279, no. 11.

of 307, many of which are about variations in recitation, especially those quoted from Ṭabrisī's *Majma' al-Bayān* which includes 107. Some of these are as follows:

(1) It is reported that 'Alī would read the word *fawasaṭna* (100:5) with a *tashdīd* (doubled) letter *sīn*. (2) Kisā'ī would read *yārahu* (99:7, 8) with the letter *yā'* with a *ḍammah*, and 'Alī would read it the same way. (3) The Prophet, as well as 'Urwah ibn Zubayr, would read the phrase *mā wadda'aka* (93:3) without *tashdīd*. (4) In *Sūrah al-Shams*, Ibn 'Āmir and the people of Medina would read *Falā yakhāfu 'uqbihā*.⁷⁶⁷ This reading has also been transmitted from Imām al-Ṣādiq. (5) Kisā'ī, Ya'qūb and Sahl would read *wa lā yūthiqu* (89:26) with the letter *thā'* with a *fathah*, and in a narration from Abū Qallābah it is said that the Prophet would read it the same way. And there are many other such narrations on the recitation of the Qur'an which are transmitted from the Imāms. This set of narrations is not authoritative because, first of all, it is transmitted through a solitary report (*khbar al-wāḥid*), and also, it has nothing to do with *tahrīf*.

We shall now examine the narrations which, according to Nūrī, indicate the occurrence of *tahrīf*. These consist of approximately two hundred narrations which Muḥaddith Nūrī has quoted in *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* from reliable sources, considering them as proof of the occurrence of *tahrīf* in the Qur'an. They are in seven groups, and an example is given of each of them.

Group 1. This group consists of exegeses intended to explain given verses by stating the circumstances of the revelation and determining the evident application. The practice of those in the past was to write an explanation in the text itself in order to remove any ambiguity in a given verse and thereby clarify it. Most of these narrations are of this type, and some examples are given below:

i) Thiḡat al-Islām Kulaynī has reported that 'Alī has recited thus:

And when he turns away, his aim is to spread mischief in the land and destroy crops and animals... (2:205);

and then he would add *bi-ḡulmihi wa sū'i sīratih*⁷⁶⁸ (with his injustice and misbehaviour) in order to state the cause of perdition, that is, injustice and misbehaviour in the management of affairs.

⁷⁶⁷ The verse is read as *Wa lā yakhāfu 'uqbāhā* (91:15).

⁷⁶⁸ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, no. 435, 289.

ii) Regarding the verse:

Those are they the secrets of whose hearts God knoweth. So let them alone and admonish them, and speak to them a word to reach their very souls (4:63)

Kulaynī also reports that, after *So let them alone*, Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far added *faqad sabaqat 'alayhim kalimat al-shaqā' wa sabaqa lahum al-'adhāb* (for wretchedness is decreed for them, and chastisement is ordained for them), and then recited the rest of the verse.⁷⁶⁹

Muḥaddith Nūrī says: 'The apparent context of the verse suggests that the extra phrase was part of the Qur'an and not an interpretation.' He made this statement to refute 'Allāmah Majlisī's view that the narration is authentic, and to show that the Imām meant it as an interpretation of the verse; that is, because of their wretchedness and their ordained chastisement, God has given the command to leave them alone.⁷⁷⁰ It should be pointed out that the style of the narration conforms with Majlisī's view, since he was acquainted with the import of the Imāms' words, unlike Muḥaddith Nūrī whose weak reasoning is evident.

iii) Concerning this verse:

...they can have no real faith until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their hearts no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with full submission (4:65),

it is reported that Imām al-Ṣādiq recited:

...and find in their hearts no resistance against your decisions regarding the issue of wilāyah and submit obediently to God with full submission.⁷⁷¹

Evidently the speaker intends to elucidate any ellipsis in the verse, and it cannot be ascribed to *taḥrīf*.

iv) Kulaynī narrates from Abū Naṣīr that for the verse:

...wa in talwū aw tu'riḍū

...and if you distort or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that ye do (4:135),

⁷⁶⁹ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, no. 211, 184.

⁷⁷⁰ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 275.

⁷⁷¹ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, no. 210, 184.

Imām al-Ṣādiq said:

...wa in talwū al-amra aw tu'riḍū 'ammā umirtum bihi

*...and if you distort the command or decline what you are commanded to do, verily God is well-acquainted with all that ye do.*⁷⁷²

Muḥaddith Nūrī – who has quoted this tradition as illustrating *tahrīf* – has himself acknowledged that the tradition appears to be an exegesis, but insisted on his original position by saying: 'Perhaps it is a clerical error (*sahw al-qalam*).'⁷⁷³

v) Abū Rabī' al-Shāmī is reported to have said:

I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq concerning the noble verse:

No leaf falls but that He knows of it, not a grain within the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or withered, but it is in a manifest book (6:59).

The Imām said:

*'Leaf means an aborted child; grain refers to a child; darkness of the earth denotes the wombs; fresh are those who are born alive; withered are those born dead; and all these are gathered in the manifest Imām.'*⁷⁷⁴

Regarding the verse:

And all things We have kept in a clear Imām (36:12)

'Allāmah Majlisī expressed that the transposition of book (*kitāb*) into *imām* in the statement of the Imām is an exegesis of the verse, and this is confirmed by a narration concerning the verse transmitted by both Sunnī and Shī'a sources which states: 'When this verse was revealed, the Prophet said while pointing to 'Alī, 'This is the manifest Imām.'⁷⁷⁵ However, Muḥaddith Nūrī was not content with this, and in a marginal note wrote: 'This confirmation is flawed,'⁷⁷⁶ meaning that the narration suggests *tahrīf* and nothing else.

⁷⁷² Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, no. 45, 421.

⁷⁷³ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 276.

⁷⁷⁴ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, no. 349, 249.

⁷⁷⁵ See Baḥrānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, vol. 4, 6-7; *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl*, vol. 26, 320-322.

⁷⁷⁶ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 284.

vi) Kulaynī has narrated from Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī that concerning the verse:

These two opponents dispute with each other about their Lord: but those who deny...

Imām al-Bāqir said: '...and of the guardianship of 'Alī (*bi-wilāyati 'Alī*)...', and then recited the remaining part of the verse:

...for them will be cut out a garment of fire (22:19).⁷⁷⁷

This insertion illustrates the most obvious instances of disbelief, for the denial of guardianship (*wilāyah*) is indeed a denial of one of the most manifest signs of God on earth, i.e., the divinely designated Guardian.

In a section on divine proof (*kitāb al-ḥujjah*), Kulaynī also narrates through the channel of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān that Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'Our guardianship is the same guardianship of God, Who did not appoint any prophet without [guardianship].'⁷⁷⁸

There can be no doubt about this, for an effect (*athar*) is due to a cause, or 'that which effects' (*mu'aththir*), and a denial of the effect is tantamount to denial of the cause. Therefore the narration is merely an exegesis of the verse, even though Muḥaddith Nūrī tries in vain to prove that the insertion was an integral part of the Qur'an.⁷⁷⁹

Group 2. As pointed out earlier, this group of narrations consists of recitations (*qirā'āt*) which have been transmitted from the Imāms through a channel of solitary report (*khābar al-wāḥid*), and are regarded as irregular (*shādhdh*) and generally contrary to the recognised (*mashhūr*) recitation. It has been said before that such narrations are not authoritative, because the Qur'an is established by a widely known transmission (*mutawātir*), not a solitary report. At the same time, an inconsistency in a recitation does not necessarily indicate a discrepancy in the text of the revelation, because the Qur'an and its recitation are two different things. Therefore, these kinds of recitations cannot be considered proof of the occurrence of *tahrīf*.

⁷⁷⁷ See Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, no. 51, 422.

⁷⁷⁸ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 1, no. 3, 437.

⁷⁷⁹ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 309.

Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'The Qur'an is revealed in one *ḥarf* by the One and Only God.'⁷⁸⁰ In another narration, it is added: 'But the differences in it are caused by the narrators.'⁷⁸¹ These were the reciters who supposed that the text of the revelation is exactly the same as the recitation of the narrators. However, as mentioned earlier, the Qur'an cannot be established by solitary report, even if the reciter were one of the prominent figures of the past, unless the Muslims as a whole affirm it, as in the case of the recitation of Ḥafs.

We shall now cite some examples of the recitations attributed to the Imāms which have been mainly recorded by Kulaynī in *al-Kāfi* and Ṭabrisī in *Majma' al-Bayān*. However, the chains of transmission are mostly weak.

i) In *al-Tahdhīb*, Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifah al-Ṭūsī has narrated on the authority of Shaykh Muḥīd, on the authority of Ghālib ibn Hudhayl:

Regarding the verse:

Wamsaḥū bi ru'ūsikum wa arjulakum ila al-ka'bayn

...and wipe a part of your heads and your feet, up to the ankles (5:6),

I asked Imām al-Bāqir whether *arjul* (feet) is in *jarr*⁷⁸² or *naṣb*.⁷⁸³ He said: 'It is in *jarr*.'⁷⁸⁴ And since the known recitation is in *naṣb*, Muḥaddith Nūrī has mentioned this tradition as a basis for his assumption of *taḥrīf*.⁷⁸⁵ This is while three of the Seven Reciters, namely, Ibn Kathīr, Abū 'Amr and Ḥamzah, have read it in *jarr*, and three others, namely, Ibn 'Āmir, Nāfi' and Kisā'ī have read it in *naṣb*, but 'Āṣim has read it in two ways, that is, in *naṣb* according to the narration of Ḥafṣ and with *jarr* according to the narration of Shu'bah.⁷⁸⁶ Shaykh Ṭūsī also clarified this point.⁷⁸⁷ In addition, variance in the recitations can never be a proof of the occurrence of *taḥrīf*.

⁷⁸⁰ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, no. 13, 630.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid. no. 12.

⁷⁸² *Jarr*: to pronounce the final consonant or a word with *i* and place it in the genitive case; hence, to pronounce it as *arjuli* instead of *arjula*. [Trans.]

⁷⁸³ *Naṣb*: to pronounce the final consonant of a word with *a* and to put it in the accusative (noun) or subjunctive (verb) case; hence, to pronounce it as *arjula*. [Trans.]

⁷⁸⁴ Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, vol. 1, 71. The changing of wāw into fā' in the original is another proof of the flaws in the narration.

⁷⁸⁵ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khitāb*, 280.

⁷⁸⁶ Abu Zur'ah, *Hujjat al-Qirā'āt*, 221, 223.

⁷⁸⁷ Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, vol. 1, 71.

In our view this narration holds no credibility, for Shaykh Mufīd reported it only on the authority of Ḥammād, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Nu'mān, on the authority of Ghālib ibn Hudhayl or Abū Hudhayl, who is unknown. It is said that he was a poet of Kūfah and Shaykh Mufīd has identified him as one of the companions of Imām al-Bāqir and Imām al-Ṣādiq. For this reason, it cannot be authentic in terms of the chain of transmission. Meanwhile, in addition to the fact that the recitation in *jarr* is contrary to the popular recitation that conforms with that of Ḥafṣ and the Muslims in general – which is the first condition of the veracity of the various recitations – it is also inconsistent with the rules of declension (*i'rāb*), which is the second condition.

Let us elaborate. Ahl al-Sunnah have considered the recitation with *naṣb* correct on account of the conjunction of *arjul* (feet) to *wujūh* (faces). That is, '...wash your faces and your hands... and your feet...' However, since there is another phrase between the conjunctors (*'ātif*) and the conjuncted (*ma'tūfun 'alayh*) – that is, *wamsaḥū bi ru'ūsikum* (and wipe a part of your head) – the argument is unacceptable, for disjunction with an extraneous expression is not permissible in eloquent Arabic. As such, Shaykh Raḍī al-Dīn Astarābādī regarded it as genitive (*majrūr*) in terms of a conjunction (*'atf*) on the position of declension (*maḥall*), for wiping (*mash*) is a transitive verb; but since wiping with the wet hand over the head – in the way 'wiping over it' applies, with no need to include the entire head – is obligatory, there is the letter *bā'* on the wiped (*mamsūh*) part of the body – that is, the head (*ru'ūs*) – to convey the meaning that mere wiping with a wet hand over the head is sufficient. That is, a mere touching of the hand on the place where the head is wiped. For this reason, the letter *bā'* is added, and since the act of wiping happens with the first touch, there is no reason to continue wiping over the entire head.⁷⁸⁸ In wiping the feet, however, it is obligatory to include the talar domes. As such, conjunction on the position is genitive. In other words:

wamsaḥū arjulakum ila al-ka'bayn

'Wipe your feet up to the talar domes,'

is like:

⁷⁸⁸ This is one of the teachings of the erudite and spiritual teacher, Shaykh Muḥammad Riḍā Iṣfahānī Jarqūṭī.

waghsilū aydiyakum ilā al-marāfiq

'And wash your hands up to the elbows.'

This provides proof that the verse is meant to state the extent of the washing of the hands and the wiping of the feet. If *arjulakum* (your feet) is read in *jarr* (*arjulikum*), it means that wiping any part of the feet is sufficient, whereas that is not what the verse means.

Therefore, the recitation in *naṣb* is consistent with the conditions for accepting a recitation, and for this reason it is authoritative in our view.

ii) Al-Kulaynī has reported from 'Imrān ibn Maytham:

A man recited in the presence of 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful:

*Fa innahum lā yukadhdhibūnaka walākinna al-ẓālimīna bi
āyātillāhi yajḥadūn.*

*Yet it is not you that they deny: it is the signs of God which the wrongdoers
impugn (6:33).*

The Imām said: 'Yes, by God! They would even impugn the Prophet.' The wording of the verse is in *takhfif* (not *tashdīd*): *lā yakdhibūnaka*, which means: *lā ya'tūna bi bāṭilin yakdhibūna bihī ḥaqqaka* ('They could not bring falsehood with which they could impugn you').⁷⁸⁹

It must be pointed out that even granted that this narration is authentic, *tashdīd* and *takhfif* pertain to the variation in recitation, and have nothing to do with the issue of *tahrīf*. The phrase *lā ya'tūna bi-bāṭilin* is an explanation of *lā yakdhibūnaka* ('it is not only you that they deny').

Therefore, according to the Imām's statement, its meaning is as follows: they are not simply content with denying and rejecting the Prophet, but they even strive to refute the faith and disprove the apostleship (*risālah*). By doing so, they are actually enemies of the Apostle of God and deny His signs. This meaning is the difference between the *ifāl* and *tafīl* verb forms, and indicates the minute grammatical attention to details in this tradition.

Group 3. This consists of narrations in which the word *tahrīf* is mentioned. Some have supposed that it refers to the distortion of words, whereas it actually refers to contextual distortion and inaccurate interpretation:

i) Kashshī has reported that 'Alī ibn Suwayd said:

⁷⁸⁹ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 8, no. 241, 200.

When Imām al-Kāzīm was in the prison of Hārūn (the 'Abbāsīd caliph), he wrote to me thus: 'O 'Alī! [In reply to your question] as to from whom you should learn the principles of your faith: do not learn the principles of your faith from other than our followers. If you learn them from someone other than our followers, it follows that you will have learned them from those who have betrayed God, His Apostle and the divine benefits. The preservation of the Qur'an was entrusted to them, but they distorted (*tahrīf*) and manipulated it. May God curse them...' ⁷⁹⁰

In *al-Khiṣāl*, Shaykh Ṣādūq has reported on the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh that the Prophet said:

On the Day of Resurrection, three things will protest before God, namely, the Qur'an, the mosque and the [Prophet's] progeny (*'itrah*). The Qur'an will say: 'O Lord! they distorted and fractured me.' The mosque will say: 'O Lord! they abandoned and corrupted me.' The [Prophet's] progeny will say: 'O Lord! they killed and displaced us...' ⁷⁹¹

And in some manuscripts, instead of *ḥarraḥūnī* (they distorted me) there is *ḥarraḥūnī* (they burnt me).

ii) Muhammad ibn Qawlawayh has narrated on the authority of Ḥasan ibn 'Aṭīyyah that Imām Ṣādūq said: 'O Lord! curse those who impugned Your prophets, destroyed Your *Ka'bah* and distorted Your Book.' ⁷⁹²

There are many similar narrations, but what has been mentioned should suffice. As stated earlier, what is meant by *tahrīf* literally and technically – in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* – is contextual distortion. That is, the incorrect interpretation which is described as *ta'wīl bāṭil* (false interpretation). Earlier we reported the narration of Imām al-Bāqir in which he wrote a letter to Sa'd al-Khayr saying: 'They thrust aside the Book in such a way that they would guard its words and letters but distort its limits.' ⁷⁹³

What testifies to this claim is a narration from the same Imām in which he classifies the reciters of the Qur'an. He says in part of the *hadīth*:

⁷⁹⁰ Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, 10.

⁷⁹¹ Al-Ṣādūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, Section 3, no. 232, 174.

⁷⁹² Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Qawlawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* (lithograph, Najaf offset, 1356 q.), sections 79 and 197.

⁷⁹³ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 8, no. 16, 53.

'And there is a person who reads the Qur'an and preserves its words and letters but damages its limits...' ⁷⁹⁴ Here the word *ḍayya'a* (damages) is used instead of *ḥarrafa* (distorts). What is meant by 'damaging the limits' of the Qur'an is that they abandon it and do not act upon it. In the same way, what is meant by distortion of the Qur'an is not placing it in the correct context. *Taḥrīf* is derived from the root word ḥ-r-f, which means to set aside.

In a tradition transmitted by Ḥasan ibn Mūsā al-Khashshāb, Imām al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said:

Innahum battarū al-Qur'an wa abṭalū al-sunan wa 'aṭṭalū al-aḥkām

'This is because they have abandoned the Qur'an, falsified its precedents (*sunan*) and discarded its laws.' ⁷⁹⁵

In the narration, *tabtīr* (to make ineffectual) is used instead of *taḥrīf*, for when the Qur'an is not acted upon, it becomes obsolete and ineffective.

Another analogy given in these narrations is the placing of 'the distortion of the Qur'an' alongside 'the destruction of the Ka'bah' and 'the shutting down of mosques.' It is evident that in the latter two cases, the literal meaning is not intended. 'The destruction of the Ka'bah' indicates the paucity of pilgrims making the pilgrimage for the sake of seeking nearness to God, and 'the shutting down of mosques' means few 'people of certainty' (*ahl al-yaqīn*) who worship God. Thus, according to the rule of comparison, 'the distortion of the Qur'an' does not allude to its literal meaning.

Nevertheless, Muḥaddith Nūrī insists that these narrations denote technical *taḥrīf* (that is, literal distortion), when he says:

The narrations cited are sufficient to establish the occurrence of *taḥrīf*, for they are complete in terms of the chains of transmission and implications... The completeness of the chains of transmission means that there are authentic and reliable narrations amongst them. In addition to the fact that most of them can be found in reliable books, these narrations are contextually *mutawātir*, and to harbour doubt regarding them is a kind of obsession from which we ought to seek refuge in God. As with their chains of transmission, the implications of most of these narrations are

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid. vol. 2, no.1, 627.

⁷⁹⁵ *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 7, 5.

also complete, especially those which mention such terms as *saqt* (omission or slipping from memory), *maḥw* (effacement), *naqs* (diminution) and the like.

He continues:

The narrations which contain the word *tahrīf* have the same implication as well, for the technical meaning of the word *tahrīf* can be understood from them, because its literal meaning is 'to change,' and distortion of a statement involves moving words from their proper places. And this proves that the form of the Qur'an has been changed.⁷⁹⁶

He also adds:

All the reports which imply the occurrence of *tahrīf* in the Torah and the Evangel are of this category. Yet everybody considers *tahrīf* here to refer to its technical meaning. If we assume that this word does not imply contextual *tahrīf* in this context, we then have no option but to consider *tahrīf*, as mentioned in these narrations, to mean literal distortion and outward change, and not contextual distortion. Many pieces of evidence denote this point: (1) some narrations point to the omission and deletion of some words and phrases from the Qur'an; (2) the distortion (*tahrīf*) of the Qur'an has been likened to the distortion of the previous scriptures of divine origin. As such, the distortion of the Qur'an as well as that of the previous scriptures must necessarily mean the changing of words and their displacement; (3) we have not come across a single verse which refers to contextual distortion (changing the meaning or changing the interpretation of the verse) being attributed to the caliphs, and we have not found any case in which they have interpreted the verses contrary to God's intent. If ever there should be such cases, they must be very few.

In short, contextual *tahrīf* in the sense of opinionated interpretation (*tafsīr bi al-ra'y*) was prevalent amongst exegetes such as Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk, Kalbī and others who were contemporaries of the Imāms, as well as amongst their followers throughout history. However, what has been

⁷⁹⁶ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 23-24.

reported from the earlier caliphs was contrary to the Qur'an in practice and nothing more, and this is not *tahrīf*, although some like Zamakhsharī have considered it a kind of contextual distortion. In this regard, refer to what Zamakhsharī, Rāzī and others have said concerning the verses, *O Messenger! proclaim...* (5:67) and *Your friend can be only God...* (5:55).⁷⁹⁷

The weak points in Muḥaddith Nūrī's reports are evident. Firstly, none of the narrations of *tahrīf* has an authentic chain of transmission, because most of them are *mursal* and have broken chains. Moreover, they are not mentioned in reliable manuscripts, and are only found in insignificant texts. Secondly, the word *tahrīf* is used lexically only to mean contextual distortion. For example, as we have pointed out, this is the sense in which it applies to the Qur'an. The earlier use of the term should not be interpreted in the same way as its more recent usage, and the explanation given by Muḥaddith Nūrī begs the question. We will later discuss the explanation given by scholars for the use of such terms as 'omission,' 'diminution,' 'effacement' and the like.⁷⁹⁸ Thirdly, there was ample practical opposition at the time when the intended interpretation of the Qur'an was established, including the position on different meanings of the verses. It is for no other reason that, by interpreting the Qur'an on the basis of their carnal desires and misunderstanding its meaning, the *qāsiṭūn*, *nākithūn* and *māriqūn*⁷⁹⁹ rose up against 'Alī.

Group 4. This consists of the narrations which, as those who subscribe to the notion of *tahrīf* suppose, imply the omission of a word, verse or sentence from the Qur'an. In explaining these narrations the pioneering *ḥadīth* critics observed that the additions in these narrations are explanatory

⁷⁹⁷ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 248-249.

⁷⁹⁸ In the section related to the fourth exposition of the alleged narrations on *tahrīf*.

⁷⁹⁹ *Qāsiṭūn* (literally, those who deviate from the true path): a title given to Mu'āwiyah and his companions who fought against Imām 'Alī during the Battle of Siffin. *Nākithūn* (literally, those who break allegiance): a title given to those who paid allegiance to Imām 'Alī in 36 AH and violated it by staging the Battle of the Camel. *Māriqūn* (apostates): a title given to a group of Muslims who first joined Imām 'Alī's army to fight against Mu'āwiyah in the Battle of Siffin, but separated from him after the imposed arbitration, condemning arbitration as a violation of religious bounds. See al-Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 191. The Prophet has been quoted as telling Imām 'Alī to fight against these three groups in the future. See Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimishq*, vol. 42, 272; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, vol. 7, 370; Arbīlī, *Kashf al-Ghummaḥ*, vol. 1, 261. [Trans.]

phrases accompanying the verses, and not part of the text itself. Yet those who subscribe to the notion of *tahrīf* pointlessly cling to them. Some examples of this type of narrations are as follows:

i) Kulaynī has narrated from Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abī Naṣr al-Bizantī al-Kūfī (d. 221/836):

Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far gave me a manuscript before I was guided⁸⁰⁰ and told me not to look at it, but I did not comply, and opened it. I recited *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*, where I found the names of seventy men from Quraysh along with the names of their fathers. The Imām sent someone to me asking me to return the manuscript to him.⁸⁰¹

In this tradition, there are questions raised by Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Kashshī regarding the personality of al-Bizantī. Kashshī has reported al-Bizantī to have said:

When the mercenaries of Hārūn (the 'Abbāsīd caliph) captured Imām al-Kāzīm and sent him to Qādisiyyah,⁸⁰² I was then in Qādisiyyah. The Imām sent a manuscript to me and I opened it. Suddenly, my eyes fell on *Sūrah al-Bayyinah*. I read in it some information which I committed to memory. A traveller with a handkerchief, clay and a seal came to me. He said: 'Bring the manuscript here.' I brought the manuscript to him. He placed the manuscript in the middle of the handkerchief, put clay on it and imprinted the seal. Thereafter, I forgot all the things I had committed to memory, and no matter how I tried, still I could not remember even a single letter of it.⁸⁰³

Once we compare this tradition with that of Kulaynī, some of the ambiguities in each of them will be removed, for what he allegedly read in *Sūrah al-Bayyinah* were the names of seventy men from Quraysh and

⁸⁰⁰ Aḥmad al-Bizantī was one of the descendants of Mehrān (the Mehranids) who were Wāqifīs. Al-Bizantī was formerly one of them, but Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far guided him. The Wāqifiyyah is a long-extinct Shī'a sect which stopped (*waqf*) at the Imāmate of Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far and refused to recognise Imām Riḍā and the Imāms after him.

⁸⁰¹ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, no. 16, 631.

⁸⁰² Qādisiyyah: a historical city in southern Mesopotamia, southwest of Ḥillah and Kufa in Iraq. [Trans.]

⁸⁰³ *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, 492, no. 481.

their fathers. It was entrusted to him by the Imām lest it should fall into the hands of the agents of Hārūn; and similarly, the Imām dissuaded him from glancing at its content lest he fall into temptation. But he looked at it nonetheless. Afterwards, when it became clear that he had not been worthy of trust, the Imām sent someone to take the manuscript back from him.

At any rate, perhaps the names which he is supposed to have seen were those of the Quraysh chiefs who either died as unbelievers, or who embraced Islam under duress of circumstances and played a crucial role in the affairs of the Muslims after the demise of the Prophet. These names explain instances of 'the faithless' (*alladhīna kafarū*) in verses 98:1 and 6, and it would undoubtedly have been written in the margin of the manuscript, as mentioned before when describing the characteristics of the manuscript of 'Alī, the Commander of the Faithful.

The meticulous *ḥadīth* scholar (*muḥaddith*) Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī says:

Perhaps it means that he saw those names which were written in the manuscript as indications of the term *the faithless* in the Revelation, but not that these names were actually in the text of the Qur'an.⁸⁰⁴

Quite simply this tradition is a *mursal* tradition and cannot be cited as authoritative. The narrator believed in *waqf* and did not acknowledge the right of all the Imāms from the Prophet's progeny. Moreover, the recording of the names in the margin of the manuscript – should the tradition be authentic – has nothing to do with *tahrīf*.

ii) Kulaynī has also reported on the authority of Hishām ibn Sālim (or Hārūn ibn Muslim in some manuscripts) that Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'The Qur'an which was revealed by Gabriel to Muhammad consisted of seventeen thousand verses.' Kulaynī mentions this at the end of a section on rare traditions (*nawādir*) in a chapter on the merits of the Qur'an (*kitāb faḍl al-qur'ān*).⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰⁴ Mawlā Muhammad Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Wāfi* (Tehran: Islāmiyyah, 1375 q.), vol. 2, 273.

⁸⁰⁵ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, no. 28, 634.

The wording of this tradition is indeed extraordinary, for the commentators are at a loss to explain it. This is because, according to current knowledge, there are a little over six thousand, two hundred verses in the Qur'an, and this conforms with sayings of the Prophet, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the successors (*tābi'ūn*), Ṭabrisī and other exegetes. Therefore, there could be no more than seven thousand, let alone seventeen thousand.

In his marginal notes to *Sharḥ al-Kāfī* (a commentary on *al-Kāfī*) written by Mullā Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī, 'Allāmah Abū al-Ḥasan Sha'rānī has stated categorically that the word '*ashar*' (ten, which would change 'seven' to 'seventeen') was added by either the scribes or the narrators, and that the narration originally mentions seven thousand verses, which is more or less consistent with the established number.⁸⁰⁶ Likewise, Fayḍ Kashānī, the author of *al-Wāfī*, reports this narration from *al-Kāfī* emphasising with certainty the phrase 'seven thousand verses.' This implies that the original copy of *al-Kāfī* at his disposal had the same phrase (i.e., 'seven thousand' rather than 'seventeen thousand'), and that he did not consider any other possibility.

In his own marginal note to *al-Wāfī*, 'Allāmah Sha'rānī writes:

In the manuscript described by Majlisī in *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl* it states 'seventeen thousand.' Perhaps this was done by one of the scribes who thought the number 'seven' was little and added 'ten (thousand)' to it. However, what is consistent with the verses of the existing Qur'an is 'seven thousand.' The apparent implication of the tradition is that the Imām did not intend to mention the exact number of the verses, but rather to state a round number that was consistent with the reality. Such instances happen when the motive is not to mention what is short, as when it is said that Imām al-Sajjād cried for forty years after the martyrdom of his father, when in fact, after the demise of his father, he did not live for more than thirty-five years.

Sha'rānī adds: 'This explanation of the addition of the word '*ashar*' (ten) is unacceptable.' He then examines the baseless arguments of those who subscribe to the notion of *taḥrīf*, and referring to the book *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* he says:

⁸⁰⁶ Sha'rānī, *Hāshiyah Sharḥ Uṣūl Kāfī Mawlā Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī*, cf. *Māzandarānī* vol. 11, 76.

I have studied this book from cover to cover, but found nothing in it that genuinely substantiates the notion of *taḥrīf*; and there is nothing except some narrations with weak chains of transmission that contain unknown material which neither Nūrī's teachers nor other scholars have ever confirmed, as they are against the principles of our school. An example is what is mentioned in the book *al-Iḥtijāj* about the deletion of one third of the Qur'an within a single verse of *Sūrah al-Nisā'*, which would imply that this *sūrah* was equivalent to roughly half of the Qur'an. This is not to mention the fact that the narrator is unknown. It is like what is in the alleged book of Sulaym ibn Qays, which is fabrication that cannot be traced back to the Companions, and also what is in the *Dabistān al-Madhāhib*, an equally baseless book.⁸⁰⁷

Muḥaddith Nūrī has himself acknowledged the differences in the manuscripts, saying: 'It is possible to find the phrase 'seven thousand verses' in some manuscripts of *al-Kāfī*.' And he adds:

In *al-Wāfī*, Fayḍ Kāshānī has contented himself with this manuscript, not mentioning other manuscripts. This act of his is a kind of treachery. I think the word '*ashar* (ten) has been omitted from his copy, and either the author or the one who supervised the writing had turned the word *alf* (one thousand) into *ālāf* (thousands), thereby rendering it consistent with the rules of Arabic syntax, but without referring to other manuscripts.⁸⁰⁸

However, Muḥaddith Kāshānī is considered one of the giants in the field of *ḥadīth* scholarship. He was one of the pioneers in the study and criticism of *ḥadīth*, and had a vast knowledge of the personalities of various narrators. He is a renowned Shī'a figure and a source of pride, as all the Akhbārīs have mentioned, including Muḥaddith Nūrī himself in other places. But here, since his observations do not tally with Nūrī's, he is all of a sudden regarded as a traitor and a falsifier of *ḥadīth*. For such accusations to be thrown against such an authority and erudite scholar of the religious law as Fayḍ Kāshānī is implausible.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid. vol. 5, 232-234.

⁸⁰⁸ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 236.

Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ has been recognised as a sound scholar of *ḥadīth* and meticulous in terms of narration. Since it deals with all the important matters of the religion in both creed and practice, his encyclopedic work on *ḥadīth* is entitled *al-Wāfi* (The Adequate), and in addition to the texts of traditions, it includes his research and explanations. In reality, in terms of its order, style and approach, *al-Wāfi* can be considered one of the finest, most authentic and accurate of books, and has been consulted and relied upon by our associates whenever there have been differences of opinion. When explaining why he chose to elucidate and comment on *al-Wāfi*, 'Allāmah Muḥaqqiq Abū al-Ḥasan Sha'rānī said:

This book has distinctive features which can hardly be found in other books. Many of our later scholars have embarked upon writing books that include all the narrations in *al-Uṣūl al-Arba'ah*,⁸⁰⁹ and amongst these works two are most prominent, namely, *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah* and *al-Wāfi*, each having its own characteristics.

The excellence of *al-Wāfi* lies in the fact that it includes narrations about both the creed and the practice of religion, and explains the narrations without quoting them haphazardly. But its most important and salient feature is the authenticity of its existing manuscripts.

Wasā'il al-Shī'ah lacks those features. In particular, the authenticity of its existing manuscripts has been doubted, unless one refers to the *Uṣūl* from which *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah* took the narrations, but then it is clear that consulting the source (*aṣl*) makes us have no need for this book.⁸¹⁰

iii) In the description of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb's personality in the book *Rijāl Abū 'Amr al-Kashshī*, it is narrated on the authority of Abū 'Alī Khalaf ibn Ḥāmid (who is an unknown person), on the authority of Abū Muhammad Ḥasan ibn Ṭalḥah (who is yet another unknown person), on the authority of Ibn Faḍḍāl, on the authority of Yūnus, on the authority of 'Ijlī that Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'God has mentioned the names of seven persons in

⁸⁰⁹ It refers to the most important collections of Shī'a traditions, known collectively as *al-Kutub al-Arba'ah* (the Four Books), viz., Shaykh Ṭūsī's *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istibṣār*; Shaykh Ṣadūq's *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*; and Shaykh Kulaynī's *al-Kāfi*. It is not claimed, however, that all the traditions contained therein are authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). [Trans.]

⁸¹⁰ Sha'rānī, Introduction to *al-Wāfi*, cf. Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Wāfi* vol. 1, 2.

the Qur'an, but the Quraysh have deleted six names, leaving only the name of Abū Lahab.⁸¹¹

With a weak and unsubstantiated chain of transmission from one unknown person to another, this narration has been used by Shaykh Nūrī and his like for claiming the occurrence of *taḥrīf*.⁸¹² Apart from the weakness of its chain, the text (*matn*) itself is ambiguous, for whose were the names, where were they, and when and for what reason did the Quraysh delete them?

Perhaps, this is the same narration about the seventy men from Quraysh transmitted by a group of the Wāqifiyyah, and the number has decreased from seventy to seven. Seventy possibly seemed too many, and it was therefore reduced.

Group 5. This consists of narrations which, despite the fact that they would under no circumstance constitute a proof, have been given as such. Some examples follow:

i) Under *ḥadīth* 31 in the book *Arbaʿīn Ḥadīth*, Abū Saʿīd al-Nayshābūrī has narrated on the authority of Jābir ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Anṣārī:

The Prophet said to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib:

‘O ʿAlī! The people have been created from diverse trees, and you and I have been created from the same tree, for God, the Exalted, says:

And in the earth are neighbouring tracts [of diverse kinds]...

He continued reciting until:

‘...which are watered by one water (13:4).’

The Prophet recited it thus, that is, he inculcated its meaning and interpretation to himself and his brother ʿAlī. Muḥaddith Nūrī has regarded this narration as a proof of the occurrence of *taḥrīf*.⁸¹³

I do not understand how this narration could be a proof of *taḥrīf*? Perhaps, he imagined that the phrase ‘he continued reciting until’ (*ḥattā balagha*) is an addition to the recitation of the text, although it is very clear that this phrase was that of the narrator who wanted to shorten the verse in the narration.

⁸¹¹ Kashshī, *Rijāl al-Kashshī*, no.135, 247.

⁸¹² Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 296.

⁸¹³ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 296.

ii) Imām al-Ṣādiq is reported to have said: 'Whenever my father performed *Ṣalāt al-Shaf'* and *Witr*,⁸¹⁴ he would recite *Qul huw Allāhu aḥad* (Say: He is God, the One)⁸¹⁵ in all the three *rak'ahs*, and then at the end he would say: '*Kadhālik Allāhu rabbī*' ('It is so, God, my Lord!'). Ibn Muhtadī asked Imām Riḍā about *Sūrah al-Tawḥīd*. The Imām said: 'Anyone who recites *Qul huw Allāhu aḥad* and believes in it has indeed recognized *tawḥīd* (divine Unity).' He asked: 'How should it be recited?' The Imām said: 'In the way the people recite it,' and added: '*Kadhālik Allāhu rabbī, kadhālik Allāhu rabbī*.'⁸¹⁶ Nūrī says: 'It can be deduced from this narration that this sentence is part of the Qur'an.'⁸¹⁷ What strange reasoning!

iii) The following has been reported:

Whenever Imām Zayn al-'Ābidīn would recite:

Indeed, We sent it down on the Night of Ordainment (97:1),

he would say: 'God, the Glorious and Exalted, said the truth – that the Qur'an was sent down on the Night of Ordainment.'

And what will explain to thee what the Night of Ordainment is? (97:2).

The Prophet said: 'I did not know [what the Night of Ordainment was, and how great it is], and God said:

The Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months (in which there is no Night of Ordainment) (97:3).'

He asked the Prophet: 'Do you know why the Night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months?' The Prophet replied: 'I do not know, but God said it is because:

In it the angels and the Spirit descend by the leave of their Lord, with every command (97:4),

and whenever God gives leave to something, He is pleased with it.

It is peaceful until the rising of the dawn (97:5).

⁸¹⁴ *Ṣalāt al-Shaf'* and *Witr*: the last three *rak'ahs* (cycles) of the supererogatory night prayer (*ṣalāt al-layl*). [Trans.]

⁸¹⁵ That is, the Prophet would recite *Sūrah al-Ikhlās* (112). [Trans.]

⁸¹⁶ Baḥrānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, vol. 4, no. 16, 521; no. 5, 523.

⁸¹⁷ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 296.

God says: 'O Muhammad! The angels and the Spirit, from the beginning of their descent until the appearance of the dawn, send salutations to you.'⁸¹⁸

I am surprised how Muḥaddith Nūrī inferred that all those words of the Imām were integral parts of the text of the Qur'an which were later omitted, although it is very clear that they were an elaboration and nothing more.

Group 6. This group consists of narrations which discuss the tents that will be set up in the outskirts of Kufa⁸¹⁹ at the time of the reappearance of Imām al-Mahdī, and say that the recitation of the Qur'an will be imparted to the people according to the manuscript of 'Alī, which will be difficult to learn for those who have memorised it as it is today, because it is different from the present version. Through these narrations, Muḥaddith Nūrī's supporters try to demonstrate that the manuscript of the Imām differs from the present one in several respects. However, this is not what these narrations imply:

i) Through the channel of Jābir al-Ju'fī, Shaykh Mufīd reports Imām al-Bāqir as saying:

When the Qā'im of Muḥammad's progeny rises up, he will set up tents for the teaching of the Qur'an in the manner it was revealed, and since that *muṣḥaf* will be different from the existing Book in arrangement style, it will be difficult for those who have memorised the Qur'an today.⁸²⁰

There are many narrations like this, with similar wordings.⁸²¹

Imām al-Bāqir has said that the difficulties referred to will be due to a different arrangement in the structure and organisation of the chapters and verses, for the manuscript of the Commander of the Faithful conformed most accurately in its arrangement to what God had revealed. No other aspects of the Revelation, such as particular times, places and occasions, or the arrangement and other matters relating to the understanding of any of the verses, had been hidden. However, as stated earlier, all of this had been written in the margins, and not in the text itself.

⁸¹⁸ Baḥrānī, *Tafsīr al-Burhān*, vol. 4, 483, no. 5.

⁸¹⁹ Usually interpreted as a reference to Najaf (Trans.)

⁸²⁰ Al-Mufīd, *al-Irshād*, 386.

⁸²¹ See Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 52, no. 85, 339; nos. 139-141, 364.

ii) Kulaynī has reported Sufyān ibn Samṭ as saying: 'I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the revelation of the Qur'an. The Imām said: 'Recite the Qur'an the way it is imparted to you.'⁸²²

iii) One of the companions of Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far asked him about the recitation of those verses of the Qur'an which were inconsistent with the popular recitation:

May I be ransomed for you! We hear verses of the Qur'an which are not in conformity with what we know, and we are unskilled in reciting them the way they are transmitted from you. Are we sinful [for this]? The Imām said: 'No. Recite the Qur'an the way it is imparted to you. The one who will teach you will come soon.'⁸²³

iv) Kulaynī has also narrated from Sālim ibn Salamah the following:

A man recited the Qur'an in the presence of Imām al-Ṣādiq, and I found his recitation differed to the people's recitation. The Imām said to him: 'Stop this recitation, and recite the Qur'an the way the people recite it until such time that the Qā'im rises up, for when he rises up, he will recite the Book of God, the Glorious and Exalted, according to its limits, and he will present the manuscript kept by 'Alī.'⁸²⁴

There are quite a number of such traditions which imply slight differences between the manuscript of Imām 'Alī and the present one. But as to whether or not this difference is in the text of the Qur'an, its arrangement or another matter is unspecified in these traditions, except in the first tradition above, which is somewhat more specific in terms of the order and arrangement, but not in any other way. This tradition provides the best evidence for explaining the nature of the differences mentioned in other narrations.

Hence, if the issue of order is one of the most important outward and structural aspects of speech – and is inextricably interwoven with the issue of expression and understanding – then one may be assured that the manuscript of 'Alī would excel in this respect when compared to others.

⁸²² Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 2, no. 15, 631.

⁸²³ Ibid. no. 2, 619.

⁸²⁴ Ibid. no. 23, 633.

On the other hand, the Muslims have learnt the Qur'an based on its present structure and arrangement and are therefore familiar with it, having memorised and passed it on throughout the centuries. Since it would be difficult for them to readjust and learn through practice a new recitation, the task will be shouldered by the Imām of the Time upon his reappearance. Thus, it would be true if the Imām had said: 'He will recite the Qur'an according to its limits.' That is, he will recite the Qur'an in its original structure, which is the same form upon which the manuscript of 'Alī is founded.

v) Amongst the narrations which indicate that the codex which Imām al-Mahdī will bring is no different to the present codex, is a narration transmitted by 'Ayyāshī from Imām al-Bāqir. He reports that the Imām said: 'When our Qā'im rises up, the Qur'an will affirm him.'⁸²⁵ That is, the Qur'an as it exists – as indicated by the verses about the advent and implementation of justice on earth by the Imām – will affirm his legitimacy, since if what affirms him were only in his codex and not in the present Qur'an and the Muslims had no prior knowledge of it, there would be a causal loop in his argument which would undermine his legitimacy, because nothing can define itself.

As such, the Imām of the Age will certainly point to those passages in the Qur'an which show his rightfulness and the truthfulness of what he says that was previously hidden. Through his enlightenment, people will discover the manifest truth of which they had no knowledge, and which they could not previously infer from the Qur'an.

Group 7. This consists of the narrations concerning the virtues of *Ahl al-Bayt* which cannot be discerned in the Qur'anic verses. It is argued that such an important issue could not have been left out of the Qur'an, but the fact that there is no mention of this in the Qur'an is evidence of its omission.

However, this argument is baseless, for if the Qur'an is read the way it was revealed by God – without concealing its true meaning – it indeed supplies manifest evidence of the noble station of *Ahl al-Bayt*.

Certainly, through many clear proofs, the virtue and nobility of *Ahl al-Bayt* have been sanctioned in the Qur'an in verses praising their

⁸²⁵ *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 6, 13.

lofty station. Any unprejudiced person who looks with insight will find these verses.

Kulaynī has narrated Abū Masrūq as saying:

I said to Imām al-Ṣādiq: 'I debate and argue with people relying on the verse:

O ye who believe, obey God and obey the messenger and those charged with authority among you (4:59).

In reply, they say that this verse was revealed in reference to the commanders in battle; and when I argue with them relying on the verse:

Your friend can only be God, His messenger... (5:55),

they say that this verse was revealed concerning the right of the faithful (*mu'minūn*); I argue [with them] relying on the verse:

Say, no reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin (42:23).

They say that this verse was revealed concerning the Muslims' relatives. In this respect I reported to the Imām whatever verse I could remember from the Qur'an...⁸²⁶

Therefore, remove the veil of prejudice and free our souls from the yoke of the ignorance:

So observe the effects of God's mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death (30:50).

This is exactly the meaning of the traditions cited by Nūrī in this group.

i) Imām al-Ṣādiq said: 'If the Qur'an is recited the way it was revealed, you will certainly find our signs in it.'⁸²⁷

The Imām's phrase 'the way it was revealed' means that the Qur'an will be understood provided that the darkness of illusion does not contaminate its clear horizons.

In the words of the Imām:

La alfaytanā fīhi musammīn

⁸²⁶ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, 513-514.

⁸²⁷ *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 4, 13.

'You will certainly find our signs in it,'

does not mean that their names are mentioned in the Qur'an, but signs which indicate their distinct virtues.

The justification for this is a narration Kulaynī transmits from Abū Baṣīr, who said:

I asked Imām al-Ṣādiq about the verse:

O ye who believe, obey God and obey the messenger and those charged with authority among you (4:59).

He said: 'It was revealed concerning 'Alī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.' I said: 'The people ask why the names of 'Alī and *Ahl al-Bayt* are not mentioned in the Qur'an.' He said: 'Tell them that the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) has been revealed to the Prophet, but it is not mentioned in the Qur'an whether it consists of three or four *rak'ahs*, but that the Prophet explained it to them...'⁸²⁸

Continuing this theme, the esteemed teacher Ayatollah Khoī has said:

This authentic tradition prevails over all the narrations which apparently suggest that their names have been deleted from the Qur'an, and it explains God's way of mentioning them therein; that is, by means of mentioning in the Qur'an their distinctive traits, but not by mentioning them by name.⁸²⁹

ii) This statement of Imām al-Ṣādiq has the same meaning: 'Anyone who cannot recognise in the Qur'an our affair is not safe when he falls prey to temptation.'⁸³⁰ That is to say, 'Anyone who cannot recognise our position concerning the guardianship (*wilāyah*), according to the description stated in the Qur'an, which applies only to us and nobody else, will lose faith when he falls prey to temptation.'

iii) Imām al-Bāqir said: 'There is a right for us from God in His firm Book which remains the same whether they omit it and say that it is not from God, or if they they do not know it at all.'⁸³¹ The Imām implies that 'Our qualifications and the description of our position in relation to the

⁸²⁸ Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, 286.

⁸²⁹ See Khoī, *al-Bayān*, 251.

⁸³⁰ *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 1, 13.

⁸³¹ *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 2, 13.

question of guardianship (*wilāyah*) are clearly mentioned in the Qur'an in a way worthy of this sublime station. And whether they omit them or are unaware of them in the sense that they were unknown to them right from the beginning, it is the same.' In other words, ignorance of the existence of the description of the Prophet's progeny in the Qur'an amounts to the same as omitting it from the Qur'an.

iv) With this in mind, the meaning of the following tradition will also become clear: 'Had there been no addition or deletion in the Qur'an, our right would never have been hidden from any reasonable person.'⁸³² This is because what is meant by 'addition or deletion in the Qur'an' is the insertion of interpretations or beliefs which consequently distort the Word of God. Or it may mean talking about the Qur'an without knowledge and divine guidance, which is technically called opinionated interpretation (*tafsīr bi al-ra'y*).

Moreover, concealing the truths of the Qur'an from the people is tantamount to undermining its manifest proofs. This being so, the tradition 'If they recite the Qur'an the way it was revealed, they will find our names in it' has the same meaning as the one quoted earlier, on the necessity of a fresh approach to the Qur'an, free of delusion.

Therefore, the meaning of the 'addition or deletion in the Qur'an' is not what the proponents of *tahrīf* have supposed, because if this were the case, it would be contrary to the consensus of all Shī'a scholars and therefore rejected. For no one – not even the Akhbārīs – has given any credibility to the notion of any addition to the Qur'an, and even Muḥaddith Nūrī has acknowledged this consensus. Hence, he tried his best to explain this tradition in the manner adopted by the Akhbārīs before him.⁸³³

Ayatollah Khoī, says: 'All Muslims, including the proponents of *tahrīf*, are of the opinion that not even a single letter has been added to the Qur'an.'⁸³⁴

v) On account of the many verses of the Qur'an which were revealed, explicitly or implicitly, in honour of this family, Imām al-Bāqir said:

The Qur'an has been revealed in four parts. A quarter is about us. Another is about our enemies. Yet another is about the laws

⁸³² Ibid. no. 6.

⁸³³ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 236.

⁸³⁴ Khoī, *al-Bayān*, 252.

and obligations, and the last quarter is about the traditions and parables, and the words of praise of the Qur'an belong to us.⁸³⁵

And in another version, it states:

The Qur'an has been revealed in three parts. One third is about us and our enemies, another is about the traditions and parables, and the last third is about the obligations and laws.⁸³⁶

The purpose in these narrations is to state the types of verses of the Qur'an, and not to numerically classify them. A major part of the Qur'an is revealed about the station of guardianship (*wilāyah*), which in itself is the foundation of the obligations, and the rest consist of the laws, traditions, words of wisdom and parables. This important aspect of the Qur'an has prompted some of the greatest and most learned thinkers of the *ummah* to write valuable books. Amongst them is the great *ḥadīth* scholar 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Abdillāh, better known as al-Ḥākim al-Ḥasakānī, who has written a valuable encyclopedia of the virtues of *Ahl al-Bayt* and the verses revealed about them.

In exposing the one who, by speaking ill of the leader of the 'Alāwīs at that time, misguided the people and then belittled the dignity of the 'Alāwī leader's forefathers, claiming that none of the exegetes are aware that the revelation of *Sūrah al-Insān* and other verses of the Qur'an are about 'Alī and his *Ahl al-Bayt*, al-Ḥākim al-Ḥasakānī says:

I considered his audacity in making this serious accusation improper, and thought it necessary to erase the unease of my friends (the Shī'a *ḥadīth* scholars), and so I began compiling this book...⁸³⁷

vi) In chapter 5 of his book, al-Ḥasakānī narrates through the channel of Sa'īd ibn Jubayr on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās: 'The range of verses in the Qur'an revealed about 'Alī is unequalled by those about anyone else.'

vii) Mujāhid has said: 'Seventy verses have been revealed concerning 'Alī having no equal,' and also: 'God sent down no verse without 'Alī being above it.'

⁸³⁵ *Tafsīr al-Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 1, 9; Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, no. 4, 628.

⁸³⁶ *Tafsīr al-Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, no. 3, 9; Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, no. 2, 627.

⁸³⁷ Introduction to Ḥasakānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, 14.

viii) Ibn Abī Laylā also says: 'Eighty selected verses of the Qur'an have been revealed about 'Alī and his having no equal in this *ummah*.'

ix) He has also reported that Imām 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn said: 'The Qur'an was revealed to us and its words of praise pertain to us.'⁸³⁸

Al-Ḥasakānī has quoted over 1160 other authentic narrations concerning the arrangement of the *sūrahs* in the Qur'an which are considered authentic by both Sunnīs and Shī'a.

In short, none of these traditions imply literal *tahrīf* in the Qur'an. Those which narrate the Imams saying things such as 'You would find our names in the Qur'an' or 'One quarter (or one third) of the Qur'an is about us,' mean that whoever has insight may find clear descriptions in the existing Qur'an. Muḥaddith Nūrī's supposition that such traditions imply omissions or deletions in the Qur'an has no basis.⁸³⁹ May God protect us from slips of the heart and sight!

⁸³⁸ Ḥasakānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl*, vol. 1, 39-42.

⁸³⁹ Nūrī, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, 237, 239, 246-247.